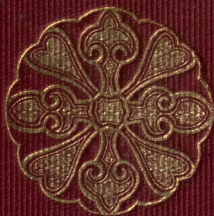


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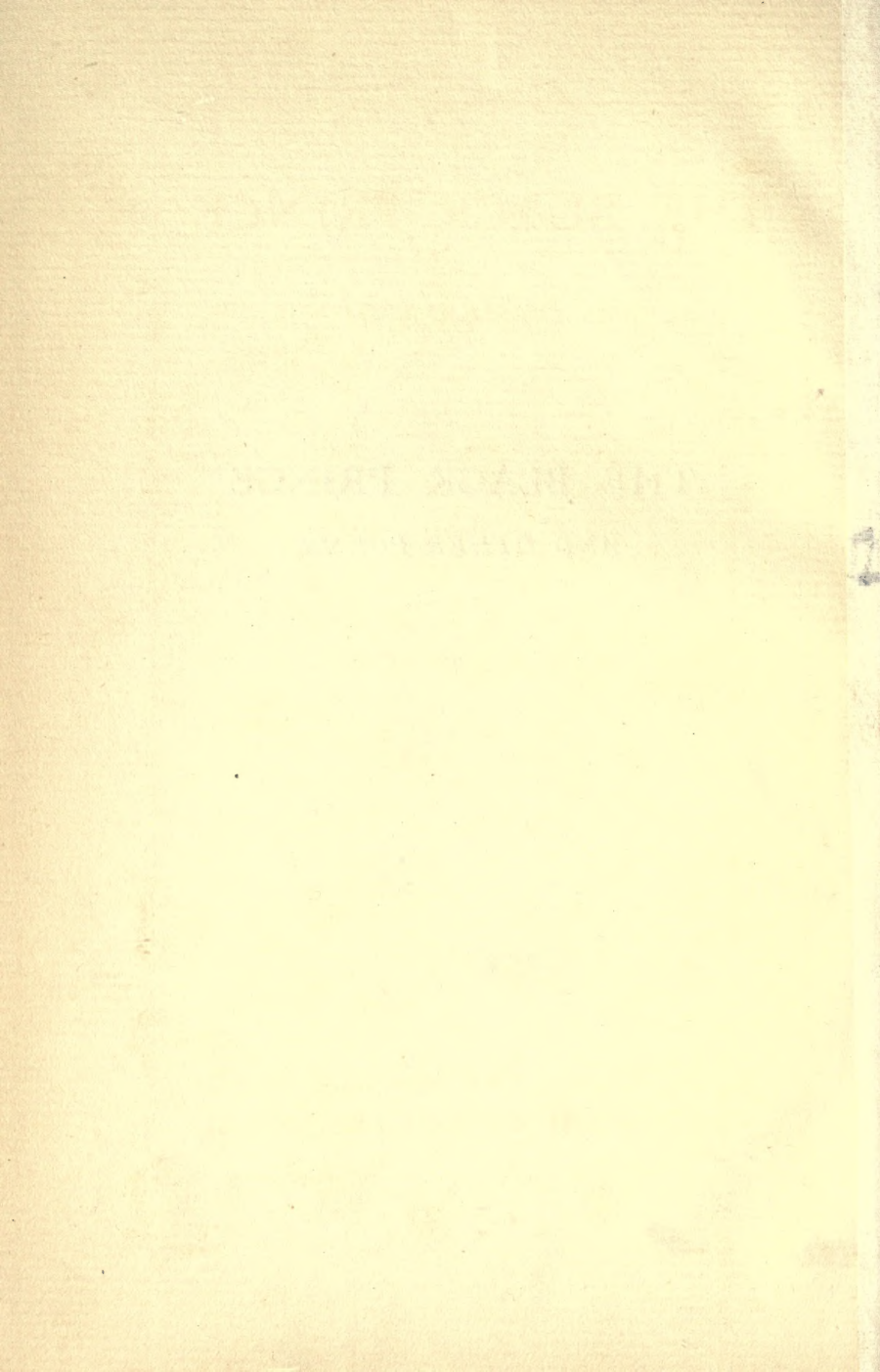




S. S. O

THE BLACK PRINCE

AND OTHER POEMS



THE BLACK PRINCE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

MAURICE BARING

JOHN LANE: THE BODLEY HEAD
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TO

E. P. G.

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SIGURD

SIGURD

THE king of men and heroes lay asleep,
Lulled by the murmurs of a dusky sea.
His army slept along the gleaming sand,
Awaiting the great battle of the morn.
Out of the sultry sky there seemed to fall
Great drops of blood, and like a lonely ghost
The pale sea cried, while in the purple West
A star emerged not seen before of man,
Outshining silvery Sirius and red Mars.
And phantom armies ran upon the sea,
And in the forest was a noise of wings.

To Sigurd as he slept there came a dream
Of a sad, shining Angel with veiled eyes
And sable wings that rustled drearily,
Like autumn leaves blown to the doors of men ;
And bending down she spake. In the hushed night
Her solemn words were sadder than the call
Of Roland's horn resounding in the hills
Of Roncevaux, when with his failing might
He blew a farewell blast to Charlemain.

And thus the Angel spake : " Make ready, Prince,
I am the holy harbinger of Death.
The Angel of the battle, I appear
To men that unto Death are consecrate.
To-morrow in the red fight we shall meet ;
Amid the lightnings of the broken swords
Thou shalt behold unveiled my terrible eyes,
And hear my fatal bugle-call ; and I
Will bear thee swiftly through the starry ways
Of night, and trackless space ; but thou must first
Give ear unto the message of the gods.

" Because thou hast been glorious in thy life,
Flinched not, nor swerved from the tremendous task :
Because thou hast endured calamity,
And grief proportioned to thy mighty heart,
The gods have stored a certain gift for thee.
To-morrow thou shalt die. But, though the gods
Are impotent to join the severed thread,
They bid thee choose the manner of thy life
For all eternity."

The angel sang
Of high Valhalla where the heroes dwell.
" A wondrous light shines in the Warriors' hall,
And quiring stars intone their morning song.

Say, wilt thou soar to loud Valhalla's hall,
And take thy place among the vanished kings?
There shouldst thou drain the cup that overcomes
All eating care, disheartening weariness,
Anguish and memories, and heals the soul."
Then Sigurd lifted his kind sea-grey eyes
And smiled most sadly, as an aged Queen,
Who once had seemed a dazzling garden-flower,
Smiles wistfully to see her grandchild weave
A coronal of daisies and wild grass.
And Sigurd to the Angel answered: "No:
For in the phantom feast, although the cup
Should drown the memory of mournful things,
Though steeped in slumberous ease, the restless soul
Would in her dream uneasily regret;
And, as a vision captive in the brain
Lies furled and folded, so the past would dwell
Within the present. My desire would seek
The shadowy years that beckon like far lights,
The glimmering days I could not quite recall,
The past I might not utterly forget.
Moreover her whom I have loved on earth,
Brunhilda, in Valhalla would not dwell.
And how without her could I dwell in bliss?"

And then her voice grew gentle as a flute
Blown o'er the levels of a glassy lake

At twilight. "Wouldst thou the dominion
Of earthly paradises, pleasant fields,
And chalice lilies and white asphodel?
There are the orchards of immortal fruits,
Lands ever golden with ungarnered corn,
And yellow roses teeming with brown bees.
Like stars in a deserted firmament,
Thou and Brunhilda shining will abide
By crystal streams and cool melodious woods,
Where nightingales and fireflies never leave
The aisles of dusk; or near some shadowed pool
Starred with the water-lilies' golden shrines."
And Sigurd smiled, "Nay, but the past would rise
And drown in tears our unforgetting souls.
As when the moon, a luring sorceress,
Casting enchantment on the stealthy tide,
Compels the salt and bitter flood to creep
And nestle in the inlets of the world,
And fringe the darkling beaches with pale surf;
Thus round the island of our blissfulness
The envious flood of memory would rise.
Soon should we pine in listless apathy,
And yearn in inconsolable regret."

Then once again the angel questioned Sigurd:
"Wouldst thou another world wherein to love,

Labour and struggle on the battlefields
Of old, and win the crown of bitter leaves ?
Taste the fleet minute, dizzy and divine,
Of rapture, and then feel the hand of Fate
Withdraw the chalice from unsated lips ?
The agony of parting, and the years
Of treachery and falsehood ? the dark web
Of poisonous deceit encompassing
The love not slander nor the tongues of men
Nor power of Gods might else have overcome ?
Wouldst thou renew thy love, to be betrayed
And fall beneath calamity once more ? ”

Then before Sigurd, like a pageant, passed
The ghosts of all the ancient troubled years.
He saw the forest where, a careless child,
He lived in a green cave, while rustling leaves
And sighing branches made a cradle song ;
He saw the tall trees shiver in the dawn,
And heard the dewy matins of the lark ;
He trampled meadows of anemones,
White crocus fields and lilies of the vale,
Which paved with ghostly silver the dim floor
Beneath the dome of Dawn, until they gleamed
At sunrise through a cloud of mist and dew,
As tapers through a veil of incense burn.

Once more he wandered through the coverts green,
And mocked the blackbird on his hemlock flute ;
Through golden drowsy noons in the deep grass
He lay half sleeping, and yet half aware
Of woodland sounds and the delicious noise
Of summer ; the warm droning insect-hum,
Cuckoo and calling dove, and the cool glimpse
Of speckled fishes in the running stream.
And when the Twilight made the woodways dim
And veiled the skies with a mysterious pall
Of emerald, he would seek a dark recess
Of leaves and moss, to sleep, while overhead
Hesperus quivered in the liquid sky
And nightingales made music to the moon.

He saw again the years of wandering :
The travel over many lands and seas,
The years of service for an alien King,
And at the last Brunhilda on the hill,
Encompassed with a ring of snow-white fire.
Once more he kissed the sleeping Queen to life
And caught the splendour of her opening eyes.
And in that daylight all the fire grew dim.
And then a vision of the lagging years
Revealed the mystery and all the threads
Close-woven in the tangled loom of Fate—

By reason of what spell unwittingly
He won Brunhilda for an alien King.
At length the awakening from the trance, the dawn
Of sunless morning and the long despair,
The saddest of awakenings in the world.

Thus, in a dim procession, passed the years,
The crowded years of his tormented life.
And Sigurd said to the angel, "I have loved
Once, and for ever, and in eternity.
Such love as this can never be again.
Though I were to be born in a new shape,
And banished to the furthest star of Heaven,
And though I drank of the oblivious wave,
Yet if I met my love again, my soul
Would recognise and clasp her, soul to soul.
Then like to exiled angels we should seem,
Or children banished from the blissful years
Of childhood, and returning there anew
After long toil, not able to regain
The childish soul, nor find the old delight.
I that have battled though my soul despaired,
And loved with love more great, more sad than death,
I that have borne irreparable wrong,
Which æons of bright bliss cannot repair ;
I, knowing that the hour of Fate has come,
Would fain at last possess the whole of peace.

Let me be drenched in Death's divinest dew,
Let me be cradled in immensity,
Let me inherit all oblivion
And the impregnable night of the dumb grave,—
The night unvisited by any star,
The sleep unvexed by any wandering dream.
Then shall I be rewarded with the void,
The inviolable darkness and the dust,
The secrecy, the silence, and the sleep
Unbroken by the struggling pangs of morn."

So Sigurd chose.

The morrow in the fight
He beheld silver armour and the eyes
Unveiled and terrible. Now once again
He tasted rapture dizzy and divine
And knew the Gods had heeded his one prayer.
Then the strange star not seen before of man
Sank in the dusky sea as Sigurd died.

And somewhere in the vastness Sigurd sleeps.

SHORT POEMS

SHORT POEMS

I

You were the Queen of Evening, and the skies
Were soft above you, knowing you were fair,
The dewy gold of Sunset in your hair,
And Twilight in the stillness of your eyes.

You did not know your dear divinity,
And childlike, all unconscious that you walked
High in celestial air, you smiled and talked,
And stooped to pluck a rose, and gave it me.

As at the gate of heaven an angel-child
Might wonder at an outcast's pleading gaze,
An outcast kneeling at the golden bars,

And say: "Come, be my playmate, here the
days
Are longer, and the ways outside are wild,
And you shall play with suns and silver stars."

II

ON WATTS' PICTURE OF PAOLO
AND FRANCESCA*To A. V. M.*

THOUGH borne like withered leaves upon a stream,
Faded and dead, they would not live again,
Nor, in the hard world, face the wiles of men ;
Their past is but the haunting of a dream.

And yet they would not sleep in asphodel,
Nor, for without remorse is their regret,
Drink deep of bliss and utterly forget ;
Not for all Heaven would they exchange their Hell.

And they give thanks because their punishment
Is sealed and sure, because their doom shall be
To go in anguish through Eternity,

Together on the never-resting air.
Beyond all happiness is their content
Who know there is no end to their despair.

III

SHALL I pretend that I no more perceive
 The peerless worth of your high qualities ?
 And say your precious words are honeyed lies
 Which my conceit compels me to believe ;

 And vow your lips divinely do deceive ;
 Call false the unclouded earnest of your eyes
 And artificial the pure tears that rise,
 When you take pity and with passion grieve ?

 Shall I forswear my faith in Truth and Right ?
 Acknowledge only God's black cruelty ?
 Yet if I bow but to an impious might,

 More great and blind my faith in you must be ;
 For you are Heaven and Hell and Day and Night,
 And Sun and Moon and Providence to me.

IV

*"To that high capital where kingly Death
 Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay."*

SHELLEY.

THE silver angel with sad sable wings
 Flew down to meet her in the dewy field,
 And broke her happy song half-way, and sealed
 Her singing with the kiss of silent things,

And bade her seek the dark and banished land.
 She did not raise wet, wistful eyes, nor pray
 With outstretched arms for one, for one more day,
 But to his shining hands she gave her hand.

She looked not back though she remembered much,
 But steadfastly she climbed the darkling stair,
 And followed firm the strange and glistening touch,

Till in the whiteness of the silent hall,
 Over her frozen eyes and faded hair,
 Queenlike she bound the scarlet coronal.

V

ΛΕΙΠΙΟΕΣΣΑ ΚΑΛΥΞ

SHE listened to the music of the spheres ;
 We thought she did not hear our happy strings ;
 Stars diademed her hair in misty rings,
 And all too late we knew those stars were tears.

Without she was a temple of pure snow,
 Within were piteous flames of sacrifice ;
 Hidden behind the dazzling shrine of ice
 A taper of swift fire was burning low.

She in herself, as lonely lilies fold
Stiff silver petals over secret gold,
Shielded her passion, and remained afar

From pity. Cast red roses on the pyre !
She that was snow shall rise to Heaven as fire
In the still glory of the morning star.

VI

I DREAMED that I was lifted to the skies
And found her in the starless end of space ;
There was no smile of welcome on her face,
There were no tears in her immortal eyes,

She did not recollect nor recognise ;
But comfort, like a dawn, then seemed to break ;
I said, "It is a dream, I shall awake
And find her turning earth to Paradise."

I wake, and know that nothing can restore
My dearest to the Earth, to sight and sound ;
I know that I no longer hope to soar

And find her shining at the heavenly bound.
She is of yesterday for evermore ;
All my to-days are buried in the ground.

VII

AND now the first cold numbness of the blow
Is past, past also is the secret smart ;
Subsided is the panic of the heart,
And the rebellious tears have ceased to flow.

Now all the world stands out distinct and sad,
And laughter rings more hollow and more vain ;
Grief seems more palpable, more plenteous pain,
And the mad strife grows hour by hour more mad.

Now I can say : "Thank God she is not here,
Thank God that yonder safe upon the shore
She sleeps beneath the cold and boundless night,

And hears the wailing of the waves no more,
Nor moan of men, in careless fortune's might,
Who cry for help and as they cry despair."

VIII

AFTER SEEING "ROMEO AND JULIET"

A TRAGEDY? Yes, for the ancient foes,
When fateful friendship sealed their perished feud,
Not tragic for the wooer and the wooed
Was life's untimely, undividing close.

The timorous maid aroused by love arose
A fearless wife. The idler who pursued
His glittering aims, a vain and petty brood,
Through love attained to manhood and repose.

So two transfigured natures blent in one,
And this full, perfect, passionate unity,
For rough and dusty Earth too bright and high,

Sank in great calm, as dreaming unison
Of darkness and midsummer sound must die
Before the daily duty of the Sun.

IX

O STAR of dawn, descended from the spheres,
From space of gold and snow and flaming zone ;
Princes there were enough among your peers
To live and love and die for you alone.

You were the Goddess of a guarded shrine,
I was the beggar lingering at the gate ;
You left behind the pomp and solemn state,
You sought the Earth discrowned and twice divine.

Now you have laid aside your diadem,
And bound wild roses in your royal hair,
And I may kiss your shining garment's hem.

Truly my soul has scaled the rainbow stair ;
The world lies glistening like a fiery gem,
And all the stars are singing in the air.

X

DIRGE FOR A POET

I PONDER on a broken lute,
The fragment of a song,
And wonder if the soul be mute,
Or if a heavenly throng
Of harmonies and mighty themes
Proclaim his interrupted dreams.

The wistful thought, the secret fire,
The darkling prophecies,
The passion and the brave desire
That lit his startled eyes ;
Oh ! will that broken music reach
Through large fulfilment unto speech ?

Like some soft fiery cloud that soars
At sunset o'er the snow,
He sought the strange unearthly shores
Beyond the distant glow ;
And sank into the wave of night
Before he reached the crimson light.

Perchance to-morrow's western wind
May bear to oceans dim,
Mysterious clouds incarnadined,
But never one like him.
Shall nature stop the march of spheres
Because of a few foolish tears ?

Once only nature breathes each note
That builds the song of time :
No more across the skies will float
That tender sunset chime.
I loved ; and in the eastern skies
A million morning stars arise.

XI

CIRCE

To R. B.

No more shall the sad, fallen Gods be seen ;
Weary of exile in the sullen world,
Forgotten by the thankless mortal race ;
They recollect the glory that has been ;
Olympus once with starry snow impearled
Haunts and derides them in their chill disgrace,
And thus they seek the dark and dreamless place.

Some linger yet, and in the Tuscan hills,
Where the pink rose-bush fringes the green corn,
The swallows hear the song of Proserpine ;
And oft Apollo with a glory fills

A church on some Sicilian shore, forlorn,
Where none but lovers seek the ruined shrine ;
But lovers know and praise the light divine.

Circe abides in her enchanted home,
The rainbow circle of an opal isle,
Set in a ghostly sea where no wind blows ;
Yet few can find that faery bell of foam.

And oft when through the night, a weary while,
Pilgrims have laboured, as the morning glows,
It blossoms in the East, a pearly rose.

Yet Circe too is changed, a listless shade
Of her who paced before the golden loom ;
For she has felt the waving of Death's wings,
A pale immortal flower, she fain would
fade ;
Her life is dusk that deepens not to gloom ;
Dumbly she feels the sharp regret that stings
The darkened soul, the lapse of mortal things.

Hushed is the music of her haunted well,
Unvexed by sighing ghosts her woodland
ways ;
For Circe has renounced her perilous wand ;
Nor seeks to capture men with any spell.
They do but drink the pity of her gaze,
They feel the solace of her flower-like hand,
And dwell a moment in her still strange land.

There in the emerald evening she bestows
A silent pitying audience on her slaves ;
And thence they sail into a long despair ;
Around her isle dark vapours seem to close,
Before them lie unending wastes of waves,
And dazed they think the vision blest and fair
Was but a mirage of the mocking air.

Henceforth as men who dream a lustrous dream
Which lingers through the brightness of the day
And clings like subtle scent of herb or flower,
They cannot but recall the halcyon gleam
Of that green island in their world grown grey ;
They see the pale witch in her dusky bower,
Like a tall lily in the twilight hour.

And some set sail and seek her isle once more
Toiling until they sink into their grave ;
But no man twice fulfils the phantom quest.
And some await upon the desolate shore
A pilot star to point across the wave,
The sunset isle they find not in the West,
Till Death upon their tir'd eyes sheddeth rest.

But Circe watches from her jasmine throne,
And when at sunset the dark waters shine,
A sound of sighing trembles in the breeze ;
The west wind brings the wistful pilgrims'
moan,
And Circe scans far on the dim sky-line
The white sails of unnumbered argosies,
Like flakes of snow upon the crimson seas.

XII

SHE is a vessel of mysterious snow,
A water-lily anchored in dark reeds,
That in the evening's violet afterglow
Unfolds its hidden heart of flaming seeds.

She has the halo of the lonely moon,
And round her floats the jessamin's faint musk,
With summer birds and bees she is in tune
And silvery moths and the delirious dusk.

In the green twilight of her leafy bower
She gave me water from a whispering well,
And there, a secret sun, she shone for me.

Now I am banished from the ecstasy,
Her face that filled the imperishable hour,
Sways like a phantom moon my soul in Hell.

XIII

To C. P.

OH ! something less than words, and something more
I'd need if I would write for you ; the spell
That bids the wandering sounds in concord soar
And opens wide the gates of Heaven and Hell.

Then would I write you a sad melody,
That only tells the loneliness forlorn
It found in the dark heart where it was born,
Yet speaks the groaning world's whole misery.

Rising, it shakes the burden from its wings
And soars triumphant to the sky and sings ;
The veil is rent ; the clouds are scattered far ;

The listening soul drinks in a flood of light
And swims into the stillness infinite,
Constant, eternal, one with sun and star.

THE BLACK PRINCE

PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

EDWARD, DUKE OF AQUITAINE. (*The Black Prince.*)

JOHN CHANDOS.

GUY OF BLOIS.

AN ASTROLOGER.

A VETERAN.

LITTLE EDWARD. (*The Duke's Son.*)

RICHARD. (*The Duke's Son.*)

PRINCESS JOAN. (*Edward's Wife.*)

A NURSE.

MARGARET. (*A Court Lady, afterwards spoken of as
ALICE FERRERS.*)

MARY. (*Her Maid.*)

BARONS, MASQUERS, COURTIERS, SOLDIERS, PRIESTS, &c.

ACTS I., II., III., AT BORDEAUX.

ACT IV., IN ENGLAND.

*Three years elapse between Acts II. and III., and
four years between Acts III. and IV.*

ACT I

SCENE I

Hall in the Black Prince's Palace at Bordeaux. A

VETERAN, the NURSE, and a COURTIER

VETERAN

To-morrow morning our most noble sovran
Edward, the Duke of Aquitaine, and heir
Of England, gallant Edward, the Black Prince,
Sets out to fight King Henry of Castile,
With John of Gaunt his brother, and the flower
Of England's chivalry. Before the dawn
He starts; thus must we stir betimes to-morrow
To bid farewell, and wish Godspeed.

NURSE

Not once

The Prince has gone to war but I have held
His stirrup with a blessing and a prayer.

VETERAN

Do you remember him a little child?

NURSE

A child? I mind him ever since his birth :
He at the first grew quickly as the grass
In April, or a lamb in windy March.
When came the Summer, how he would pester me
To take him to the hayfields ; more than aught
He loved to gambol in the hay, or lie
On a green hillock, gazing at the Heavens,
And listening to the music of the scythe :
And oft, when I had searched and panted long,
I found him buried in the hay ; dear heart,
How he would fright me by the water's edge !
I mind the day when screaming for sheer joy
He ran to meet me with a speckled egg,
The first that he had found. I mind my tears,
The time when he set sail for France and Crécy,
All clad, my tender lamb, in heavy armour,
And mounted on a warhorse, with a sword
Beside him, big enough to please a giant.
He was turned sixteen years ; beneath his helmet
His innocent fresh face was like a cherub's :
Oh ! 'twas a sorry shame I thought, that day,
To take my pretty darling to the war,
And bitterly I wept ; but he was strong
And tough as a young sapling in the forest,
And nimble as a bee.

VETERAN

Was that in London ?

NURSE

The day he started by his father's side
He rode along the streets of London town,
Cantering apace, bright as a silver penny,
Past us he flashed like the blue kingfisher
That darts across the stream. His golden locks
Streamed to the wind like silk, his eyes, God bless
them,

Were bluer than the sky, so that I thought
St. George himself had come down from the Heavens
To fight for England and protect our King.

VETERAN

I saw him in the twilight after Crécy,
His armour dented with a thousand blows,
And dulled with stains of blood. I never saw
A fairer vision of impetuous youth.
He had been revelling in the thickest fight,
Sure in the dealing of a deadly blow,
As is a kestrel swooping on his prey,
And light and buoyant as a dragon-fly
He would brush past with noble nonchalance

A certain death ; and when he met his father,
 Glowing with mingled modesty and pleasure
 There was no crown could equal the reward
 Of the proud tear that flashed in the King's eye.

COURTIER

I saw him, too, when Poitiers' fight was finished ;
 When in the crimson tent he served King John ;
 Oh ! then he seemed the Prince of courtesy
 And comeliness. As royal as a Lily,
 The silver Fleur de Lys of France's banner ;
 And modest as the English rose. The minstrels
 Sang of him as another Ganymede,
 Famed in old song, as he who ministered
 To Jove and the proud gods in their gold hall.

NURSE

And he, my precious lad, is still the noblest ;
 The Prince of grace, the Lord of courtesy,
 And the most gallant soldier in the world.
 See here he comes with all his goodly train.

[*Enter the BLACK PRINCE, PRINCESS
 JOAN, Knights and Courtiers.*]

EDWARD

Fair Lords and friends, I bid good-night to you.
 To-morrow with the rising sun we march

Against King Henry of Castile, and though
They have Duquesclin fighting on their side,
And we be few against a mightier foe,
Let us not be dismayed ; for neither strength
Nor victory abides in multitudes,
But is to whom God gives it. If He will,
That victory be ours, then ours the glory ;
And if we die, I have the noble Lord
My father, and beside him two brave brothers,
And you have each of you a trusty friend
Who will avenge us well. I pray you, sirs,
Fight well, and if it please God and St. George,
My part shall be that of a goodly knight.
Thus till to-morrow, noble sirs, farewell.

[*Exit all except* JOAN.]

JOAN

Thou startest then to-morrow at the dawn ?
And I shall miss thee during the long summer.

EDWARD

I shall return before All Hallows Eve.

JOAN

So long as that ? I thought this Spanish War
Could last but a few weeks—nay, that is long—
Nay sure : thou wilt be here before the autumn ?

EDWARD

Perchance I never shall return.

JOAN (*laughing*)

Thou jestest.

What can the craven Spaniards do to thee ?

EDWARD

Fortune is fickle and the foe is false.

JOAN

Then go thou not at all ; for thou hast fame
 Enough, and surely plenteous store of laurels :
 And let thy brother Lancaster take charge
 Of the great army, and remain at home.
 It is a timely thought that thou should'st stay ;
 I should have said it sooner.

EDWARD

Would'st thou hear

It said an English host had gone to war
 And that the Black Prince had remained at home
 With women folk ? for he had lost all liking
 And stomach for the fight. 'Tis thou that jestest.

JOAN

Nay, but why strive to fright me with thy words ?

EDWARD

I shall be home before the summer's past.
Then shall we hold a gorgeous festival
To celebrate our triumph. We shall conquer,
For 'tis my habit to return victorious.

JOAN

I trust the strength of thy right hand ; and Fortune
Has ever favoured thee. And now, my Lord,
I bid good-night to thee ; and it were well
That thou should'st go to rest : for on the morrow
Thou startest before dawn. I shall be there
To hold the stirrup, and to say farewell.
Good-night, my Lord : thou art in need of rest.

EDWARD

Good-night, sweet Joan, good-night until to-morrow.
[Exit EDWARD.]

JOAN

In truth this life of ours is a strange thing ;
" Good-night, my noble Lord, Sweet Joan, good-night"
We say, or we do ask an anxious question ;
Or feign a foolish fear : and well I know
That I might go my everlasting journey,
And he would scarcely heed it. Well he knows

That I know well : and though I am not heartless,
The gods have steeled my heart with carelessness.
For, had I loved, then greatly had I suffered
To see him love another, and not me.
The Heavens are just ; for they, denying love,
Have granted me the precious boon of beauty.

[Looks at herself in a small glass.]

For naught on earth would I exchange the gift.
She whom he loves is far less fair than that ;
Oh what can match the rising ecstasy
Of reading an unutterable wonder
Upon the face of men ? To see my beauty
Reflected in the speechless gaze of eyes ;
To see when I fling loose my hair and open
The splendour of my eyes, a thousand faces,
The vast rough crowd, sway in a strange amazement,
To hear them murmur like a rustling forest.
I thank the Heavens for my careless heart.
One heart-beat more would mar the peerless peace.
The world shall kneel in wonder at my knees ;
Whilst I a listless Deity will smile.
Sweet to me is the incense of the world,
And very sweet is the untroubled calm,
The carelessness divine. I am content.

[Exit.]

SCENE II

Margaret's garden : EDWARD and MARGARET

EDWARD

I could not come before, the tedious feast
Prolonged itself while veterans retold
Tales of past fights and well-forgotten deeds.

MARGARET

It matters little now that you are come ;
To-morrow I shall wait, in vain, alone,
And you will be who knows how far away ?

EDWARD

But for a little : a few months.

MARGARET

Like years
For me those heavy months. But I am sad
Not only for the absence, though that brings
A shiver from the wings of Death : I feel
That envious Fate premeditates some blow
And that misfortune hovers in the air
Like a grim bird of prey. Yes, I am sad,

But not with sorrow only ; threatening shades
Pursue me, and a great uneasiness
Lies heavy on my heart. I fear the gods
Have aimed an arrow at our happiness ;
I see the creeping shadow of eclipse
And hear Fate's stealthy footfall.

EDWARD

Nay, but wherefore
Think on such things ? I love you : that is all
There is to think on. And my love is strong
As aught save death.

MARGARET

As strong as Death perchance ;
But love is wax between Fate's iron fingers.
All things have been too beautiful this year ;
When winter was but half-way through, we heard
The wayward footfall of the Spring. Too soon
The crocus and the swallow came ; too soon
The orchard put on a white bridal veil
And hills grew red with tulips. Not a storm
Dishevelled the frail pageant, nor disturbed
The slender miracle of blushing snow,

The blossoms soft as ocean-spray that hung
About the cherry-trees. Ah!—well I knew
That some calamity was lurking near.

EDWARD

Nay, why calamity? I shall return
Before the nightingale has ceased to sing.
And we in the blue darkness of the orchard
Will listen while he serenades the rose;
We in the stillness of the dawn will hear
The murmur of the roses answering,
That only lovers know; and we shall wander
In the deep dewy grass of starlit woods,
Through thickets bright with fireflies; we shall hark
How, far away soft waterfalls and streams
Chime in the whispering dome of summer night.
I feel no boding of calamity,
Since in the ordered scheme of things it is
That I should go to war, and thence return
A conqueror.

MARGARET

I like not this campaign
In fevered lands against a treacherous foe.
And yet 'tis not the battle that I fear;
The Fates would deem it a cheap victory

To slay thee ; not thus open-wise they deal
With mortals ; rather will they find a way
Of poisoning our love, or sundering
Our lives, and, as they deal out the despair,
Will mock us with a useless recompense
And strengthen the then hateful chain of life.
For I am sure they weave some dark design ;
Our bliss has been too wondrous ; it has lingered
Too long at the bright zenith. Suddenly
The night will fall before we see the sunset.

EDWARD

Ah ! brood not on such things, 'tis idle fancy.
To-day is ours : why trouble for the morrow ?

MARGARET

To-morrow I shall be alone. 'Tis best
To be prepared ; I have been always ready
To hear the extremest sentence Fate can pass ;
But thou art never ready ; like a child
Thou dost believe the gods are merciful,
Thou art so happy, and thou wishest well
To all, and how could any one, thou thinkest,
Wish harm to thee ? but I know well the Fates
Are neither kind nor careless ; without pity
They carry out immutable designs

And sacrifice the bravest and the best
To shape the world according to their whim.
'Tis well I know it ; then, when first I saw you,
As you did ride into Bordeaux that day,
Splendid and modest in your darkling armour,
Crowned with gold laurels, on a chafing charger,
While trumpets sounded and the hautboys spake,
And jewelled banners fluttered in the wind—
A captive King beside you, and the glory
Of conquest all about you like a cloud—
Then, when the shout of Poitiers rent the air,
And you, the Black Prince, to that swaying crowd
Eclipsed the glory of King Charlemagne
And all his knights, and seemed a new Achilles,
Most chivalrous, most princely among men :
Then when I brought you garlands, then, when love,
Like instant lightning flashed from you to me,
I did foresee the inevitable end.

EDWARD

Nay, cease—talk not of that.

MARGARET

I did foresee
The inevitable end. I knew that summer
Might stay awhile with pomp of bees and roses

And harvest moons ; but there must come a time
When petals fall, when the green woodland dies,
And nothing but bare boughs remain. I fear
No sudden storm, no unexpected whirlwind ;
But the pale progress of decay, the blight
Of Autumn ; Summer dying, leaf by leaf,
And rose by rose ; the red moon, like a wizard
Luring chill vapours from the leafless woods.
I fear no unforeseen catastrophe,
But the slow dawning of indifference ;
The gradual ebb and listless march of autumn
That surely will invade thy soul—the season
When the fierce passion of thy heart shall wane
As wanes the living fire of summer days
To the pale mockery of winter suns.

EDWARD

O cease, O cease ! I pray thee do not utter
These freezing words, for they are blasphemy,
And stab me like a knife. Has the Black Prince
Been ever charged by bitterest enemies
Of being indifferent to friend or foe ?
And how to thee, whom I love more than life ?
Thy words have touched me with an icy chill ;
See, I am trembling like a child ! O never
Will our midsummer love know aught of autumn.

And should the Heavens prove so pitiless
As to lay hands upon our love, 'twill happen
Thus only : either that I fall in battle,
Or that thou meetest with untimely death :
And should'st thou die, I will not tarry long,
But run to meet thee, be it in Heaven or Hell
Or endless night. Because my world is thee,
Thou art my Hell, my Heaven, my Sun, my God,
And there is no existence for my soul
Without thee ; neither force, nor space nor time
In all the universe. My love is wide
As ocean girdling the round world and high
As the dark canopy of topless night ;
So high, so wide.

Look, in the eastern sky

The morning star is waning, and I feel
The dawn afoot upon the whispering sea.
The daylight breaks and I must haste away.
Now let us kiss, and say but once good-bye,
Nor wound our hearts too often with that word
"Farewell," that chills me like the hand of Death—
Oh it is more than death to go, but soon
We shall be reunited. In the battle
Thy face shall guide me like a blessed banner,
Keep thou the thought of me deep in thy heart,
And I shall see thee as thou standest here

Among the orchard blossoms, like the Queen
Of Spring : pale as those petals and more fair.
Farewell, thou blossom of the world, farewell.

MARGARET

I shall behold thee as I see thee now,
As I have always seen thee ; day and night
I shall behold thee, as thou art to-day
And have been always. Thou the very brave,
Peerless and pleasant ; thou the shining pattern
Of chivalry in all the world ! Farewell !

[*Exit* MARGARET.]

Enter CHANDOS

CHANDOS

Thou art an early riser, I can smell
The Dawn, but cannot see her saffron robe,
And still the moon is bright.

EDWARD

I have not slept
This night : I have no need of any sleep,
Nor could I slumber if I felt the need.

CHANDOS

Is it the coming war that is the cause?
We have the flower of Europe's chivalry
To fight for us.

EDWARD

I have no thought of that.
O Chandos, I am sick at heart, and fear
Is knocking at my soul. Not that weak fear
Which turns the coward's blood to milk and catches
The craven weakling at the throat. But dread,
Invisible and vague and veiled dread,
An unsubstantial phantom that pursues me
And throws its shade betwixt me and the sun.

CHANDOS

But what has brought this fear?

EDWARD

I know not, Chandos.
I am afraid of Time's slow ravages;
Afraid lest Fate should cheat me of the prize
Which I would win. Conscious of pent-up strength
I sometimes fancy that my life is over,
That all my days will be but a brief dawn

That promised me a noon of gold and glory
Never to come. For I began life early ;
And when a boy I fought with veterans,
Winning renown ; yet but renown of promise !
But then I thought that manhood once attained,
I should prove worthy of my glorious title,
My royal race, and my own early prowess,
And die at last a not inglorious king.

CHANDOS

That day will surely come, and it will be
A happy day for England.

EDWARD

Haply God

May yet allow me that imperial task.
But I am fearful lest my bright ambition,
Crushed by a sudden turn of Fortune's wheel,
May die before the time of ripeness comes
For grappling with the task.

CHANDOS

Why should such a thing
Befal ? Believe me these are idle words,
Ill suited to thy temper.

EDWARD

Nay, I fear

The fulness of my noon may come and go,
And I shall let it slip by unawares ;
And that for me there never will be more
Than a brief dawn and a delaying dusk—
Oh ! not the ample noonday. A brief spring,
And an encroaching autumn of decay.
Never the broad blaze of rich midsummer,
Never the majesty of garnered corn,
Nothing but perished leaves and blood-red suns.

CHANDOS

These are the cobwebs of a tired brain ;
Thou lackest sleep.

EDWARD

We go to fight a battle,
And like as not return as conquerors.
Yes, I am sure we shall be conquerors.
And then all things will be but as before,
And, as before, I shall be lingering here
As idle as a wasp. Day after day
Will slowly pass in empty tournament ;
Night after night in futile feast, and I
No nearer to the goal. Perchance 'tis written
That I shall never reach the goal.

CHANDOS

'Tis madness
Thou speakest, Prince. These are no fighter's
words.

EDWARD

Thy words are just. I can well bide my time.
For I am sure of strong capacity
To wrestle with great issues. I thank God
For my unbounded dream and vast desire,
For lightnings of ambition in my soul. . . .
And yet I fear lest some unseen mischance
Should dash the soaring fabric to the ground,
And curb my else insuperable will
For ever.

CHANDOS

'Tis not like thee thus to brood
On possible remote calamity ;
It is not like thy frank and fiery spirit
To dwell in sick and vain imaginings—
Thou hast been richly graced by Providence.

EDWARD

Yes, but the ways of Providence are dark,
And the hand of Fate is heavy ; and the wheel

Of fortune, when it turns, does grind to powder ;
For, when Fate strikes, the bravest knight must yield
As quickly as the coward, and surrender,
Nor give a single blow. But hark ! I hear
The trumpet ; it is time that we set forth.

[Sound of trumpets is heard.]

SCENE III

Interior of Astrologer's Tower in the Pyrenees

ASTROLOGER

The planets speak of an impending task,
A work of bitterness to be fulfilled
Now, in the instant future. Who shall come
To break the undisturbed serenity
Of my long solitude ? The night is quiet,
My sole companions are the wandering stars
Whose silence I can spell. *[Goes to the window.]*

But hark ! I hear

The sound of trumpets in the hollow valley,
And shifting torches flicker in the night.
Again the trumpet calls. It is a camp,
And I can hear the neighing of the horses,
And clank of men in mail. It is an army.

Perchance a battle has been fought, or haply
 Is it the eve of battle? Calling echoes
 Of horn and clarion wander in the valley;
 And many hundred torches twinkle now
 Down the dark depths. I hear a step. Perchance
 Some wounded man may come to me for aid;
 Some shepherd. [*A sound of knocking is heard.*]

Nay, it is the visitant
 Of whom the planets spake. Come in and welcome
 In Heaven's name, whoever ye may be.
 [*Enter BLACK PRINCE, alone.*]

ASTROLOGER

Who art thou, stranger? Crav'st thou food and shelter?

EDWARD

I am a knight, the captain of an army,
 And what my name is boots not; from the wars
 I have come hither.

ASTROLOGER

Wherefore cam'st thou hither?

EDWARD

My camp is in the valley whence I spied
 A light that glimmered from a far-off mountain,

Like a bright beacon ; when I spake thereof,
They of the village said a holy sage
Dwelt there, and communed with the silent stars.
They said that he held converse with the dead,
And read the riddle of the skies.

ASTROLOGER

I knew
That thou should'st come. I read it in the sky.

EDWARD

I crave this boon, that thou shouldst lend thy science
To lighten me of my perplexity.

ASTROLOGER

Unfold thy tale and I will then afford
What help I can.

EDWARD

'Tis but a simple tale.
I am a captain, born to lead and rule,
I would that my dominion may be great
And wise and bountiful, as wide it shall be.

ASTROLOGER

Is that the only thought that haunts thy life ?

EDWARD

Nay, there is one who in my little world
Shines for me more than sun or moon or star.
One woman, whom devoutly I adore
With ceaseless worship, such as the pure saint
Breathes in his silent cell, and with a might
Of sacrifice as perfect to the end
As that of racked unconquerable martyrs.
My life is lit by two great orbs ; the one
Is thirst for glory, and the second, love.

ASTROLOGER

Where is the canker ?

EDWARD

Lately I have known
The fear of coming doom. This fight is fought,
And I have won another victory ;
Yet still I am unquiet.

ASTROLOGER

Speak thy fear.

EDWARD

A chilling ague creeps through all my limbs
And lassitude invades me. I had mocked

At this, did not a dream that came to me
Last night, lie heavily upon my soul.
I cannot rede its meaning.

ASTROLOGER

Thou shalt tell

Thy vision.

EDWARD

It was after the great battle
We fought at Navarettè, and I slept.
And to the shadow of my dream, an angel
Came, as the rainbow comes to the grey sea.
He seemed the living spirit of the morning,
Winged with the golden fleeces of the dawn ;
Sandalled with fire, and diademed with dew,
Clothed in the orange ripples of the sunrise
As with a royal robe. A burning torch
He placed within my hands, and guided me
To paths of paradise ; there, while I walked
In bliss, I saw another angel come.
His face was calm and dazzling as the snow
Upon the mountains, pale as Hesperus
Alone in the sad firmament of May.
He took the living torch from out my hands ;

Then the bright world grew pale and cold with
fear ;

I knew that I was face to face with Death.
He led me to a sad triumphant portal,
Which opened on a silvery hall of dusk ;
And there I saw the heroes and the kings,
The valiant dead who perished unafraid,
Sleeping beneath a radiant vault of peace,
White as cold marble in the ghostly mist,
Their faces glimmering with unearthly calm.
And those who fell forgotten in the fight,
And those whose names still shine above the world
Like the fixed stars. There in tranquillity
Equal they lie, the heirs of happiness,
Rich in their long inheritance of sleep.
And round the glistening temple I could see
The yawning darkness of a great abyss.
Then as I made to enter, the stern angel
Forbade me, pointing to the world, and I
Followed with lingering steps, and at the margin
Of the abysm craved darkness and access
To that immensity. But once again
The angel turned, and pointed with pale hands
Unto the toiling world. Death who had snatched
The torch of Life from out my hands, denied
Even his utter darkness unto me.

And then methought I woke, with a deep breath,
Attaining the ineffable release.
I said unto my soul : 'Twas but a dream !
Yet daylight came not, and I seemed to linger
Eternities in a cold sunless place.
And all at once I felt as though a fiend
Were binding me in fetters, and I heard
A noise of rivets hammered into steel.
I strove to move, but I was tightly bound ;
And tentacles unseen dragged me to Hell.
I screamed, and, screaming, found myself awake.

ASTROLOGER

Was that the end ?

EDWARD

Yes ; but I woke in terror,
A stone upon my heart ; and since that hour
I cannot chase the melancholy fit.

ASTROLOGER

Into the holy crystal I will gaze,
Although already I discern some meaning
In this thy dream. *[Fetches crystal.]*

O stranger, art thou sure
That thou would'st peer into the hidden future ?
[Gazes into crystal.]

EDWARD

Yes, I am sure. And if untimely death
Be written in the book of fate, make haste,
Nor hesitate ; for I have faced great dangers,
And have looked Death so often in the face,
That I shall neither quiver nor draw back
From the cold touch of his imperious hand.

ASTROLOGER (*slowly turning from the crystal*)

My son, thou needest all thy courage now.

EDWARD

Then it is worse than Death ?

ASTROLOGER

Art thou still sure
That thou would'st know ?

EDWARD

I pray thee, make an end.
Dost thou not see me stretched upon the rack ?

ASTROLOGER

Then summon now thy courage, noble child ;
For in the crystal there were piteous sights :

Thou spakest of an ague in thy bones,
And of a certain lassitude. My son,
Thou hast a mortal sickness ; that fell fever
Will never now depart.

EDWARD

Is there no more
Than this, Death's simple sentence ? We must all
Die on a certain day ; much better then
To sink in the full flower and bloom of youth,
As though the new untarnished moon were torn
From the first hour of dusk, and never knew
The fulness and the majesty of midnight,
Leaving on earth remembered witchery,
And unassuaged regret.

*[After a pause, pacing up and down in
rising excitement.]*

Then I die young.
And I shall meet the warriors of the past
Who fell like torches flaring for a moment
In the dark night. And foremost I shall meet
Balder, of whom my old nurse used to croon
A cradle-song ; the great and glorious god ;
The living sun ; the spirit of all youth,
Fated to meet eclipse and suffer darkness.
I shall meet Alexander, that swift soldier,

Blushing with glory like a rose of fire.
 Achilles, splendid as a milk-white bull
 Decked for the sacrifice ; and I shall hear
 Unhappy Roland blow his horn, and see
 The lightning in the eyes of saddest Siegfried,
 These shall I see, the brave, the fallen stars,
 The young whom the gods loved.

ASTROLOGER

No, Edward, no !

[EDWARD *starts*.

Not for thee, Edward, Duke of Aquitaine,
 And heir of England, Edward the Black Prince ;—
 Not such a gift the Fates have stored for thee ;
 For thee no boon of swift untimely death
 Is kept. Thou shalt live on.

EDWARD

I cannot trace
 Thy meaning, gentle sir ; I am in darkness.

ASTROLOGER

My words shall be but few, since I must stab.

EDWARD (*seating himself*)

Nay, tell me ; even to the bitterest end.

ASTROLOGER

Edward, thou shalt not die, but rather live ;
Yet neither shalt thou reach a mellow age
Of plenitude and ripeness. Pale disease
Shall linger by thy side, and thou shalt know
Eternal autumn to thy day of death.
There shall be battles fought and thou not there ;
Dangers to dare, and thou within the tent,
And foes to face, and thou upon thy couch,
The warhorse idle, and the sword undrawn ;
And from afar the voice of drums and trumpets
Shall call ; but thou shalt not obey the summons.
There shall be thunder of a thousand hoofs
Upon the plain ; and in the woodland aisles
The horn shall echo, and the hounds shall bay ;
Listless, thou wilt not heed : and thou shalt drink
The waters of despondent lassitude,
And taste the ashes of indifference ;
And from Despair thou shalt run out to Death,
But Death will send thee to his child, Despair,
Denying thee his darkness, for a while,
For many weary years, as in thy dream.
And now thou knowest all. Thou hast been brave ;
But there are fairer fields for bravery
Than Poitiers or than Crécy—to live on
With the foreknowledge of the nothingness,

Yet never to succumb unto despair,
To bear in silence the deep wound of Fate.

EDWARD

Is there no more ?

ASTROLOGER

That is the end.

EDWARD

I thank you—

I thank you for your pains, and say farewell.
The evil is sufficient for to-day.

ACT II

SCENE I

Hall in the Palace. EDWARD and PRINCESS JOAN

JOAN

My noble Lord, are you not now prepared
For the festivity? Will you not wear
A richer raiment for the feast?

EDWARD

I doubt
If I shall grace the feast to-day, for I
Am ill disposed, and sick—

JOAN

O, pay no heed
To prattle of physicians. Thou art strong ;
This fitful sickness comes but from fatigue,
After the labour of the rough campaign
And hardships of the field.

EDWARD

These noisy feasts
Weary me. I would rather stay away.

JOAN

The Lords will deem it strange that we should hold
A feast to celebrate thy victory,
Thy glad return, and thou thyself be absent,
Thou, the whole cause, the pillar of the feast.
I pray you, gentle Edward, think thereon.
We have a masque ; the ladies of the land
Are coming, dressed in quaint fantastic robes ;
Myself I have a new and glittering robe,
All white and downy with soft plumes ; my damsel,
When I did wear it, with a small gold crown
Set in my hair, said that from faery-land
I seemed to come—a Queen, who by some magic
Is changed into a white and splendid peacock ;
So long, so soft, so feathery my train,
So white and proud my neck, the damsel said.

EDWARD

I cannot come to-day, and there's an end.

JOAN

Most humbly, I beseech you and entreat—
Be not so hasty and so ill-advised :

Would you then hear the nodding courtiers say,
When I shall enter in my robe of State,
Radiant and shimmering in my snowy plumage,
I, the fair maid of Kent, the peerless rose,
Blushing and fresh among these sultry beauties :
Would you then hear them say, "She comes alone,
Her husband has not any words for her
Nor eyes for her bright beauty ?" think of the Court ;
The task of Princes never passed for pleasant.

EDWARD

Am I not lord and master of my goings ?
Must I submit to woman's idle talk
And selfish fantasies ? I cannot come.

JOAN

If you will have it so, my lord, farewell,
I go to make me ready for the feast.

EDWARD

Sweet Joan, forgive the roughness of my speech ;
Believe me, I am not in tune for feasts ;
I pray thee, Joan, do not entreat me more.

[Exit JOAN. Enter CHANDOS.]

EDWARD

Chandos at last ! Quick, tell me all your news.
Did you find Margaret, and give my message ?

CHANDOS

Yes, she was sitting by a stately loom,
Like Circe, weaving subtle tapestries
In the cool shadow of her cypress grove,
And singing a soft ditty while she worked.

EDWARD

What did she say ?

CHANDOS

She cometh to the feast
Arrayed in all the pearls you gave to her ;
She counts the minutes, and can scarcely weave
For very fever of anxiety,
And longing after you ; her face is pale
From waiting and from watching. When we rode
In triumph through the streets, she from a window
Watched us, and threw red roses on our path :
She says you did not see her, and she frets.

EDWARD

The sun, the crowd, the shouting dazzled me :
I could see nothing. Looks she just the same ?

CHANDOS

She is as peerless as the sea-born goddess ;
The fire of summer leaps within her veins,
And summer night is brooding in her eyes.

EDWARD

Had she no other words ?

CHANDOS

Oh ! sir, have patience,
And I will tell you all. After the feast
And pageantry is ended, you shall meet her
In the accustomed place, hard by the sea.

EDWARD

I would the feast were done ! O weary time
Before I see her face !

CHANDOS

How fares it with you
To-day, my lord ; do you still feel fatigued ?

EDWARD

Chandos, 'tis no fatigue that wearies me ;—
I have a deadly serpent at my heart

That gnaws my very life. At Roncesvalles
 While we were camped there, all alone I sought
 A holy hermit, skilled in the signs of Heaven—
 But to no mortal man have I confessed this,
 And telling you I speak to a sealed tomb—
 This sage foretold me of much bitterness
 Which in the future I should undergo ;
 That I should never be a knight again,
 But waste away in slow and lagging sickness
 Until the end.

CHANDOS

O sir, you tell me not
 That you do heed such talk of knaves who trade
 On credulous fools ?

EDWARD

Haply, he spake true things ;
 For I myself have had a like foreboding ;—
 And yet I dream that I have much to live for :
 Whether I come to be a glorious monarch,
 Or pine here in Bordeaux. Since our return
 To-day, the thought of Margaret has stilled
 Such sad forebodings, and uneasy dreams.
 The thought that I shall swiftly see her face
 Has put to flight these sickly phantasies.
 How can I wait until the sunset, say ?

[Enter LITTLE EDWARD.

LITTLE EDWARD

My mother sends me, and she bids me tell you
The banquet will be ready in an hour,
And begs you to get ready, father ; come.

EDWARD

'Tis well, say that I come.

LITTLE EDWARD

And I forgot
To tell you there are some white strawberries,
Such as you like—nurse took me to the forest—
And I myself did pick them for the banquet ;
We started before sunrise, to be sure
Of finding them ; for children of the town
Pick all before we have the chance to seek.
And, father, in the tournament to-morrow,
Will you ride the grey charger, whom we christened
Poitiers ?

EDWARD

My little son, I shall not ride
To-morrow in the tourney : you shall stay
By me, and watch me give the laurel crown.

LITTLE EDWARD

Are you not going to ride ? 'Tis the first time
That you should with the women-folk look on.

EDWARD

Away : and tell your mother that I come.

LITTLE EDWARD

But father——

EDWARD

Run : did you not hear me speak ?

SCENE II

The same Hall in the Palace. Minstrels are playing in Gallery. Prince and Princess are seated on two Thrones. Courtiers, Knights, Ladies, &c. Dance and music.

MARGARET

The Prince looks pale ; this Spanish War has tired him. Doubtless the hardship and the toil was great.

CHANDOS

Yes : and the Prince did take the roughest share Of labour, with the meanest of his soldiers.

MARGARET

Did you deliver him my message ?

CHANDOS

Yes ;

At sunset he will meet you by the sea,
As soon as the festivity is ended.

MASQUE

Enter PARIS and HELEN of Troy.

PARIS

Ten years the fight has lasted, ten long years ;
The Greeks have known alternate hopes and fears,
But thou art fairer than thou wert, that day
When from the shores of Greece we sailed away ;
Thou art as perfect as a drop of dew
Reflecting the round rainbow's every hue ;
Thou art as radiant as the lonely gem
Set in the Twilight's dusky diadem.
The gods to mould thy matchless shoulders chose
From highest mountains the divinest snows.
Of lilies of the vale they wove thy skin
And carved thy faultless teeth in jessamine.
With sapphires and the sea and twilight skies
And the drowned moon they made thy dreaming
eyes.

And the gold river of thy hair was spun
With the hot beams of the triumphant sun.
So that thy mouth they might incarnadine,
They melted rubies from an Afric mine ;
And all the roses of the world were crushed
Before thy snowy cheek had faintly blushed ;
Of ivory and pearls they built thy throat
And gave thy voice the dawn's mysterious note.
Beauty for all things, Helen, must atone,
For the gods took to make thy heart, a stone.

As the slow cadence of the violin
Draws from the hard and hollow wood its spell,
So dost thou quiver like a beaten bell
And hard as crystal is thy heart within.
Round thee like incense mounts the prayer, the praise,
Men give their lives, the love of all their days.
Passing, as though thou heededst not nor knew,
Thou in return dost give thy summer mirth ;
Jove sent thee like a rainbow to the earth :
A cloud of phantom fire and frozen dew.

[*Enter* ACHILLES.

ACHILLES

False Paris, dost thou dare to show thy face ?
Emblem of falsehood, craftsman of disgrace ;

Soon will the gods deliver us the town,
And we shall burn each towering temple down.
Hecuba humbled in the dust shall kneel
And Hector shall be crushed beneath my heel.

PARIS

Cease thy proud taunt and bragging insolence !
Thou too shalt meet with righteous recompense.
See, here is Death, who comes to tell thy fate.

[Enter DEATH.]

DEATH

Achilles, dipped in the dark stream of hate,
Pleasant and lovely knight, the young, the brave,
Make ready for the shadow of the grave !
Courage and youth avail thee nothing now,
The Fates have set their seal upon thy brow,
For carelessly they fix their dreadful seal,
And to the Fates in vain thou shalt appeal.
Those whom the gods love meet an early death—
Untimely the bright hero perisheth ;
Allows his shining sword and shield to rust,
And leaves sweet air for darkness and the dust.
Yet, 'tis a better thing to meet the doom
In the first spring of youth's most wondrous bloom
Than taste the dismal Autumn's discontent,
Weary, remorseful, and indifferent.

EDWARD (*rising suddenly in a passion*)

Cease, cease the Masque : this sugared chanting tires
us.

Have done, depart ; we fain would dance a measure—
Minstrels, strike up a merry roundelay—
Come, noble friends, and join the dance with me.

MARGARET (*to CHANDOS*)

What ails the Prince ? and why this sudden wrath ?

CHANDOS

Methinks 'tis sickness ; mark how pale he is.

[*Music ceases, Masquers run out frightened. PRINCE leads PRINCESS down and joins a dance.*]

SCENE III

By the Sea-shore

MARGARET, *alone, sings.*

The roses in my garden
Were white in the noonday sun,
But they were dyed with crimson
Before the day was done.

All clad in golden armour
To fight the Saladin,
He left me in my garden
To weep, to sing and spin.

When fell the dewy twilight
I heard the wicket grate,
There came a ghost who shivered
Beside my garden gate.

All clad in golden armour,
But dabbled with red dew ;
He did not lift his vizor,
And yet the face I knew.

And when he left my garden
The roses all were red
And dyed in a fresh crimson ;
Only my heart was dead.

The roses in my garden
Were white in the noonday sun ;
But they were dyed with crimson
Before the day was done.

MARGARET

The sunset tarries ; will it never come ?
I know not why I sing so sad a song—
My songs are sadder than I am to-day ;
For gracious have the gods been unto me,
And sent my warrior home,—and I am grateful.

See, here he comes. How often in my mind
I have called up this meeting and rehearsed
The ecstasy ; and now the hour is come
It will be different and more divine
Than as I pictured.

[Enter EDWARD.

EDWARD

Margaret, my life !

[Embraces her.

MARGARET

I cannot speak for very joy, and mute
I can but gaze and gaze ; and to myself
Repeat that you are come, perpetually,
Over and over again that you are come.
Could you not seek me in my house this morning ?
I waited for you in the cypress grove.
My lord, while you were fighting far away,
I worked you an embroidered sable doublet,
Adorned with sea-blue sapphires, to be worn
At festivals and feasts. O, when you rode
Into the town this morning, I was there,
Leaning out from a storied parapet,
Strewing your way with flowers ; you did not see—
You did not once look up into my casement.
I thought you must discern my hungry eyes

Among a million faces. Wherefore, Love,
Did you not look? Did you not surely know
That if a crowd had come to welcome you,
I must be somewhere in that crowd—the soul,
The star, the pulse of the vast multitude?
And yet your eyes did never seek my face.

EDWARD

The sun, the crowd, the shouting dazzled me.
I could see nothing.

MARGARET

Then I went straight home,
And spent an hour before the polished glass,
Tiring my hair according to your fancy,
And donning the apparel you love best;
My robe of silver tissue wrought with pearls,
With the green train that hangs high from my shoulder
Pale as the Lily of the Valley's leaf,
And brodered with Annunciation Lilies
According to your wish; and for a girdle,
The rubies that you gave me, red as blood,
As fiery as my love and hard and firm,
And true as is my constant faith to you;
Why did you leave me lonely? There I waited
The livelong morning; until Chandos came
And bade me to the feast. I had no heart

To come in the apparel I had donned
But for your private eyes, and so I doffed it,—
And dressed myself like a sad sorceress
In seagreen silken fabric wrought with moons,
As you did see me there.

EDWARD

Thou knowest well—
Had I been able, I had quickly come.
The nobles and the prelates sought my counsel
With State affairs. My wife awaited me,
And my son Edward ; then I sent you Chandos,
So that you should not fret yourself, nor wait
In vain for me.

MARGARET

And why did you break off
The classic masque with such a gust of passion ?

EDWARD

I was awearied of the tedious feast
And longed to meet thee. Therefore I broke off
The Masque.

MARGARET

You should have rather stopped the dance
Instead of frighting thus the harmless players.
I have not seen thee angry thus before

For such a little thing. What was the cause?—
I think there is a cause thou hidest from me.

EDWARD

Nought but impatience to behold thy face.

MARGARET

If thou hadst been so fretful and impatient
To see my face, why cam'st thou not this morning
When I was waiting hungry for thy kiss?

EDWARD

I have already said I could not come.

MARGARET

There is some secret thing that thou concealest ;
Thy face to me is as a glassy pool ;
Tell me then, is there aught that troubles thee ?
Confess, and I will shrive thee.

EDWARD

There is nothing.

MARGARET

I see the truth : Oh ! that it should be so.
The haunting omens that I had forgotten,
That had quite melted like an ugly dream .

Before the splendid morn ; my prophecy
Was true, you do not love me any more !
That is the reason why you did not come
To-day ; the reason of the sudden outburst
When the poor masquer spoke of wither'd love,
And youth outliving the first fire of passion,
And wasting in indifference. I see,
I understand ; my fearful heart was true ;
O misery ! that it should come so soon !
The summer has departed from the world !

EDWARD

Margaret, I have trusted in thy sense
Till now, and never known thee blown about
By whims, as lesser women ; therefore, heed me,
Hear and believe me ; I will drown thy doubts.
But, Margaret, why waste the precious time ?
Come, let me wipe away these foolish tears
In the strong certainty of my embrace.

MARGARET

You madden me. Oh, you must surely see
I know the truth, that protest is in vain.
It is in vain ; not all the eloquence
Of words and vows will raze the certainty
From my fixed mind. I know you far too well.

If it were true that you still cared for me,
I should not need a single syllable
To strengthen my calm faith. Not silver tongues,
Nor all the honied arts of sweet persuasion
Will now convince me that you are the same.
I have been blind. I was so mad with bliss,
That power of sight and reasonable thought
Were taken from me. Now, I see more clear ;
I see it in the cloud upon thy brow,
I see it in thy listless hands, and most
I see it in thy lustreless vague eyes,
Where passion used to swim like a veiled sun.
Fool that I was not instantly to know !

EDWARD

Come, let me chase this madness with a kiss.

MARGARET

It is not madness, but the bitter truth.

EDWARD

Let us not waste the fleeting time in quarrel.
If you persist in this insane surmise,
I will await your saner mind, to-morrow.

MARGARET

To-morrow ! My to-morrows are all dead !
While you were absent, every night I dreamed
I heard you knocking at my garden gate,
And ran to meet you. And, as I woke, I said,
Although he is not come, he loves me still.
To think that I shall wake to-morrow morn,
And say, " He whom I waited for so long
Is here, but he no longer loves me now."
To think that now, when you are come, it is
The same as when you were so far away ;
That you are now a shadow, and our love
The memory of a music that is mute—
With me the memory shall live like fire,
And it will eat my heart, until I die.
For I shall die. I am not brave enough
To look on you and say : " There was a time
When the Black Prince had but one thought in life,
And that one only thought was Margaret."
What wrong have the Fates done thee ? Wilt thou go ?
Must thou to England ? Is thy father sick ?
Or must there be an everlasting parting ?
Has thy wife railed against me ? Do the nobles
Say thou must leave me ? Yet eternal parting
Were better than the causeless death of love
I fear. O speak, O speak the truth to me !

EDWARD

Unless thou quit this folly, I must go.

[Walks impatiently away.]

MARGARET

Then it is true thou dost not love me more ;
Then it is true that all thy love is dead !
Oh, thou art cruel. Go, then, for I hate thee ;
Thy love was but a game, a mockery,
And thou didst never love me in the past.
Thou knewst that I was fair, and it was pleasant
To hear the people murmur when I passed,
“That woman who is radiant like the dawn,
She is the mistress of our Prince.” I thought
That thou wast fashioned of a greater mould
Than that which goes to shape the common man.
Thou art the same as all the rest, no, worse ;
A braggart, one who, though a prince, will boast
To dazzle foolish men.

EDWARD

I go. Farewell.

Haply to-morrow I shall find you sane.

Farewell.

[Goes.]

F

MARGARET (*running after him*)

No, Edward, no, come back. Forgive

[*Drags herself at his knees.*]

My fiery words. My reason is distraught,
With endless and intolerable waiting
And every day's suspense. When thou didst come,
The shock of rapture was too great for me.
I knew not what I said ; and, more than mad,
I gibbered like a spectre. I unsay
All that I said ; I call back every word ;
Only forgive me. 'Twas a sorry thing,
To speak the things I spoke. See, here I kneel,
I drag myself imploring at thy feet,
I grovel in the dust ; only forgive me,
My merciful great king, forgive, forgive.

EDWARD

There is no cause for kneeling or for prayer,
There is no need to pray for my forgiveness,
For there is nothing to forgive. I told thee
That the long waiting had distraught thy soul.
Now we will talk no more of sorry things.
Look up, the glory of the sky does chide us,
For it is all suffused with glowing love.

MARGARET

O noble heart, too great and generous Edward,
I would that I had bitten out my tongue.
Forgive me, I cannot forgive myself.

EDWARD

A thousand roses in delicious death
Fade in the sky ; and their mute requiem
Has soothed the ocean with a wondrous peace.

MARGARET

What have I done, my king, what have I done ?
Thou art too great and too magnanimous,
And I the darkest blot upon the world.

EDWARD

There is no wrinkle on the glassy sea
That glitters like a mirror ; the far cliffs
Seem thin as a transparent haze, and purple
As the dark violet. See ! one white sail
Is fading in the crimson of the West.
I wonder who is sailing on that ship ?
It makes me sad to see ships disappear
Beneath the rim of ocean ; for I know
What I should feel in watching such a ship
If it bore one I loved. Supposing I
Watched such a ship and knew thou wast on board—

MARGARET

Great heart : thou hast forgiven me ; but I
Can give no pardon to my wretched soul !

EDWARD

Now it has sunk beneath the sea, the sun
Has touched the cooling water ; the gold fire,
Blent with the liquid azure, makes a green
More soft than a magician's emerald ;
Now the high clouds catch fire at the reflection
Of the fast sinking orb ; see ! one by one
They come to life and shine. And now the sun
Has disappeared, and the whole sky is dyed
With deeper hues ; a little whispering breeze
Has crept upon the waters, and they ripple
How beautiful these pools are in the sand,
Reflecting the red sky. I fain would see
Thy face in such a pool,—how great the magic,
The spell of that reflected face would be.

MARGARET

Yes, like an image in a holy crystal.

EDWARD

Talk not of holy crystals. I abhor
The necromancer's art ; they are all knaves,
Who lure us to despair with cheating omens
And lying signs.

MARGARET

Where hast thou seen such men ?

EDWARD

Nowhere ; but it is so. See now the cliffs
Are grey, and the stirred waves are shivering ;
The sky is like a sea of amethyst,
The stars creep out, a spirit seems to breathe
In the pale circle of the pearly moon.
Twilight has fallen ; let us go away.

SCENE IV

In a Church. Dawn.

EDWARD

Here will I stay awhile and think ; my brain
Is whirling, and I dare not say a prayer.
She thinks I love her still, and yet I feel
No love for her ; my passion is pretence,
And each wild kiss is but a mocking lie ;
She is now but the shadow of a dream,
An echo from the grave to my cold heart.

Here in the darkness let me say my prayer. [Kneels.

O Mary, Mother, in whose care my soul
 Is like an unfledged bird ; and thou, St. Michael,
 Who kindled my desire for fame ; and thou,
 St. George, who made me strong and fought for me
 At Poitiers and at Crécy, and who taught me
 How to be gentle, hear my piteous prayer.
 I have not any longer thirst for glory—
 No more desire, no courage, and no strength.
 I have forgotten my felicity.

My soul is listless and my heart is dead.

O Mary, Mother, who didst make my heart
 Deep as the sea, and tender as the rose,
 And clinging as the creeper, love's sweet word
 No more has meaning to my careless ear.
 The prescience of a doom has taken away
 The wish to live ; oh touch my perished heart
 And it shall leap once more with the glad morning—
 My soul shall melt once more at the rich sight
 Of sunset and of twilight ; let my body
 Tingle once more when the loud trumpet calls
 And the horn wakes the woodland. [Pause.

It is vain,

It is in vain. My prayer is all in vain,
 I cannot pray, I am too sad. O God !
 What have I done to meet with such a doom ?

[Pause.

Help me, St. George, my Captain, stir my pulse ;
But for one instant water my dried heart,
One moment only—gladly will I die
After that moment ; let me feel once more
My heart is something else than a dead ember
Which once was glowing fire. After to-day
I cannot walk into the staring world,
Like a paid mummer acting a false part,
The semblance of a prince. St. Michael, thou
Didst make me true ; how shall I then play false
To the whole world ? Oh God, be merciful !
Afflict me with extremest racking tortures,
With anguish and disgrace and utter ruin,
With penury and shame ; let me be conquered,—
I, the unconquered,—captured, bound in chains,
Lashed to the chariot of my enemy ;—
But give me back my throbbing heart again.
O Mary, Mother, whose most precious heart
Was wounded seven times, oh wound mine too
With one such wound, with but one little wound.
Only my heart is broken, not my soul—
My high, impregnable soul—and not my will
That never has been taught to bend or yield.
Yet if it be Thy will, O Mary, Mother,
Help me to drain this cup unto the lees,
I pray thee, Mary, give me back my heart,

For I am like a censer made to swing
Unceasingly, and breathe a cloud of incense
Fragrant and warm ; and if the living coal
Be deadened, there is no more use for me.
O, Mary, Mother, help me in distress,
And intercede for me before God's Throne.

[Bells ring.]

ACT III

SCENE I

MARGARET's Garden. Evening. MARGARET and
MARY.

[BLOIS is heard singing outside.]

MARGARET

The after-glow of sunset fades away,
The twilight falls, and I am still alone :
Since noonday have I waited, richly clothed
In such apparel as my lord loves best,
And yet he tarries.

MARY

Not for many a month
Hast thou been thus adorned ; not since the day
The Prince returned to Bordeaux from the war.
My lady has put on the self-same raiment
She wore that day ; that which she doffed again
Before the palace feast.

MARGARET

I mind it well ;
But I have donned my fairest robes in vain
Since the Prince comes not ;—and he will not come.
He said, I will be with you at the noon.
When noonday shone I waited still in vain.
At last at set of sun, I sent my page,
Some moments past, to seek the Prince. Alas !
Alas ! I fear his quest is all in vain.
In truth, he has no answer for my page.
'Tis strange ; and yet it is not strange at all,
For the Black Prince loves me no longer now.

MARY

Have you yet tried what jealousy can do
To spur his halting love ?

MARGARET

Yes, I have tried.
I have made false pretence of love with Blois,
That Gascon lord, who every evening sings
A serenade beneath my garden wall.
He sings to-night. But Edward knows full well
My love is not a love that shifts and wanes.

MARY

Art thou so sure that he no longer loves you ?

MARGARET

I bear at heart the deadly certainty ;
There is some secret thing he hides from me ;
And if I tax him with his heavy mood,
He prates of his strange sickness ; yet I know
If somewhat had not made a mist between us,
He would have loved me even unto Death.
Once my proud nature rose and leapt to him,
As the wild ocean rises to the moon ;
And as the moon shines down upon the sea,
He smiled upon my silent tide of love.
Now both of us but play a piteous part,
Feigning the shadow of a perished passion,
For when I saw he loved me not, my heart
Broke with one pang. But now his listlessness
Has brought me to despair. My heart is weary,
My life is withered. I would fain forget.

MARY

Then let another love thee, thou art young.

MARGARET

Thou dost not understand. I was once loved
By the Black Prince. I cannot be content
To be the mistress of a meaner man.

And yet so wild, so mad is my despair,
That I could plunge into a gulf of crime,
And dare the worst to drown my misery.

[Enter CHANDOS.

CHANDOS

The Prince has sent me ; he will come anon.
He marvels that you fret.

MARGARET

O miracle
That I should fret ! Here since the stroke of noon
Have I awaited him.

CHANDOS

What if the Prince
Has other cares, and larger cares, perchance ?

MARGARET

I was once not the least among his cares.
Speak plain, I pray you. You have come to say
That the Black Prince loves me no longer now.

CHANDOS

With other eyes I do regard the Prince ;
To me, and to the men who fought with him

At Crécy, Poitiers, and at Navarette,
He is much more than man. In the gold past,
No hero brighter shines, and in the future
There never will be such a Prince again.
And now great sorrows visit him, disease
Lies heavily upon him ; troubles gather ;
The whole horizon looms before him black.
You choose this time to come to him with sighs,
And whining whims and fretful fantasies.
Believe me, this is not the time or season.
His days of love are over.

MARGARET

Chandos, cease !
Enough, enough, I will not hear such speech.
Begone, I say. I will not see you more.

CHANDOS

You rail, because you know it is the truth. [*Exit.*
[BLOIS *is heard singing outside.*

MARGARET

It is the Lord of Blois, go bid him enter
And bring my ruby girdle ; I will set
A coronal of rubies in my hair ;

That time I wore a garland of red roses ;
 And now there are no roses ; but the stones
 Are harder, and do make a braver show.
 Should the Prince come, say that I am not here,
 Bid him await me in the lower chamber,
 And tell him that I shall not tarry long.
 Throw open, too, the casement on the lawn.
 It is a mild and balmy April evening,
 Like that on which the Prince set out to war.
 And bring no torches, for he loves to see
 The swallows circling in the green half-light,
 Dark, dark against the sky. Good-night to you.

[Exit MARY.]

[BLOIS again heard singing.]

[Enter MARY, with girdle and coronal.
 Exit through garden.]

MARGARET

Should Edward come, why, Blois and I will talk,
 While the Prince lists. Perchance 'twill touch his
 heart
 To see another king where he was king,
 Here in the kingdom of his cypress grove.

[Enter BLOIS (through garden).]

Tread softly, pray come hither, gentle lord.

*[Goes to meet him : they walk in silence
past window.]*

[Enter EDWARD (at window).]

MARGARET

Escape through the small gate, it is the Prince
Who, should he find thee here, would surely slay thee.

[Exit BLOIS.]

[EDWARD comes out.]

'Tis you : forsooth I had forgotten quite
That you should come this evening.

EDWARD

It is plain ;

And plain, too, that you lacked not company
To make up for my absence.

MARGARET

Were you listening ?

I see the casement open. Yes, a friend
Was here, who comes to pay me homage often
When I am left alone : a gentle knight,
Impetuous as the ocean's racing tide,
And fiery as an untamed steed.

EDWARD

His name ?

MARGARET

Why, it is Guy de Blois ; you know him well.
He won the prize at the last tournament.
You must have often seen me talk to him.

EDWARD

Tell me it is a jest ; I will forgive you ;
And we will laugh together at the sport.

MARGARET

There is no jest. The Lord of Blois does love me.
And that is all.

EDWARD

O Margaret, take heed ;
For I am perilous when roused to anger.

MARGARET

What is there that can rouse thee ? Is it strange
That Guy de Blois should love me, and that I
Should give him back his love ? You loved me once,
'Tis true ; but that, my friend, was long ago.
And I, I loved you too, how long ago !
But women cannot be for ever constant
To men who have proved fickle.

EDWARD

Margaret,

Have pity on me : speak a pitying word ;
Dispel this ugly shadow.

MARGARET

'Tis no shadow :

It is the simple truth ; did you not know
That I loved Guy ? It is the common talk
Of the whole town. 'Tis true that in these days,
You have been buried in secluded quiet.

EDWARD

O, say another word and I shall kill you !

MARGARET

I am quite ready ; Nay, I can but think
That I shall make a goodly sacrifice,
Dressed as I am in palest green and silver,
The Lily's colours ; 'tis the dress you loved,
And now he loves it too. How quickly Time
Goes round ! how swift and sudden are his changes !

EDWARD

I cannot lend my credence to this tale.

MARGARET

You falter like a child. Be honest, Edward ;
Let us be honest, both ; you have repute
For honesty. You loved me once most dearly :
I gave you back your love tenfold renewed :
And then there came a season, when the flame
Flickered a fleeting moment, and went out.
When we shall stand before God's judgment-seat,
The record of my suffering at that moment
It may be you shall hear. I think that God
Will deem it weighs the balance of much sin.
But when the first pang of the wound subsided
Which slew my heart, I own the torn flesh healed ;
The blood was staunched, leaving a shrivelled heart :
And I became as listless as you are,
And as indifferent ; until one day
I saw young Guy de Blois ride in the lists,
And then, as once before, like instant lightning,
Flashed love from him to me. You know the truth,
The naked truth.

EDWARD

It cannot be the truth.
You do not love another : not this Blois
Or any knight. I will not yet believe it.
You say this but to anger me, or rouse

My jealousy. It cannot be the truth ;
I beg you, Margaret, to jest no more.

MARGARET

It is no jest ; it is the very truth.
Do you not understand a woman's heart
Is made of other stuff than simple wax,
To bend in any shape a man shall choose ?
Love is a jealous god, and is not mocked.
His heart is proud, and full of fire divine ;
His majesty may not be many times
Slighted and set at nought, as you have done ;
Do you not clearly see our love is over ?
Why, since you came 'twere vain to count the times
That we have been at white-hot pitch of anger,
And afterwards been reconciled. The day
That you returned we bandied words of wrath ;
Since then, we scarce have met but we have quarrelled,
And afterwards been reconciled again.

EDWARD

It is the common course of all true love,
To quarrel and be reconciled again.

MARGARET

But what has been the cause of our fierce quarrels ?
This only that you do not love me more—

This, that you do not love me. The months passed,
The long and dreary winters came and went,
And my poor heart which broke, how long ago,
When first I saw that you no longer loved me,
At last rebelled, and sought and found its solace.

EDWARD

One last time, Margaret, say that it is false,
As it is false that I no longer love you.

MARGARET

I love Sir Guy de Blois, him and no other ;
As much as in the past I once loved you.

EDWARD

O God ! to think that Thou couldst make a being
So fair to look on, with a heart so black,
And with a soul thus full of deadly venom.
I will speak briefly ; you are still my fief.
You shall not look on Guy de Blois again ;
And if he cross the threshold of this house,
He shall be slain beneath your storied casement,
And for the present you shall not depart
From these four walls, but wait my further orders.

MARGARET

I shall see Blois as often as I please ;
And there are many spots besides this house
Where we can meet. I fear no threatening talk.
I thought you knew me better than to strive
To browbeat me with threats.

EDWARD

O Margaret,
Say it is but a hideous jest, and say
That you still love me ; and if all were true,
I would forgive you all ; I would forgive
You anything. O say it is not true !

MARGARET

It is the truth ; the very heart of truth.

EDWARD

Then I'll not speak but carry out my threats ;
And thou shalt be imprisoned in this house.
A guard shall watch it ; and your Guy de Blois
Shall be removed far from your sight and reach.
I care not if he dies.

MARGARET

You do not care ;
That is the secret of your whole life now.

EDWARD

Drive me not, Margaret, to the last despair.

MARGARET

Slay me, and quick ; but listen and hear clearly.
 For I am mistress of my ways and goings ;
 My will is fixed to love whom I shall choose.
 And now to put an end to this vain strife,
 I shall leave France, and therefore say good-bye.

EDWARD

Merciful Lord ! That Thou hast made this creature !
 One last time, Margaret, I do implore you
 To say it has been but to prove my passion.

MARGARET

I wish you a good-night and last farewell.

[*Exit* EDWARD.]

MARGARET

He cares ; he feels ; he lives once more—Ah no !
 Deep down within his heart he does not care ;
 He suffers ; but his sorrow is the pang
 Caused by the stab of jealousy and pride.
 But deep down in his heart he does not care.

SCENE II

Hall in Palace. PRINCESS JOAN and NURSE.

JOAN

Where is the Prince ?

NURSE

Lying upon a couch
In his bedchamber, and I think he sleeps.
He has been sore oppressed these last two days,
And sad in humour.

JOAN

Would we could devise
Something to strike his fancy and distract him
From brooding.

NURSE

But the skilled physicians say
No malady afflicts him, save the ghost
Of fever that he caught in the far country,
Which needs must sometimes visit him.

JOAN

Yet naught
Seems to delight him now.

NURSE

Oh, it is bitter !

That he should brood with this vain malady
Casts a sad shadow on our gallant court.
Would you not fain devise some interlude
To cheer the greyness ?

JOAN

I had hither bade
Some Gascon barons, skilled in falconry.
But now that Queen Philippa has just died,
We cannot decently hold festival,
Nor may I strive to chase away the shadow
That darkens the old brightness of Bordeaux.

[*Enter EDWARD (pale). Sits down.*

EDWARD

What time is it ? I have been in my chamber.
I think I slept ; but where is John of Chandos ?

NURSE

My Lord of Chandos is not yet returned.
He went upon your errand. Will you see
Your little son ? He begs to come to you.

EDWARD

Not now, not yet ; I first must talk to Chandos :
It is a pressing matter ; presently
Edward shall come.

JOAN

Can I do aught for you ?

EDWARD

No ; 'tis a matter but for me and Chandos.

[*Exit* JOAN.]

NURSE

My child, my child. I know thy grief, I come
To comfort thee with my poor withered hands.

EDWARD

Nurse, I am weary, and I fain would sleep,
And never see the dawn again ; for Heaven
Has no more care for me upon the earth.
Must Heaven too choose this season of despair,
When I am weak and have no strength to struggle,
Now when each day is darkened by defeat,
When every hour they bring me bitter news
Of cities taken by the enemy,
Of friends and captains whom I loved and trusted
Slain on the field or yielding to the foe ;—

Why must God choose this dark and dreadful date
To take away what in this sorry world
Can least and never be replaced, my mother ?
My mother, whom through these long fruitless years
That I have held the mockery of court,
I have not seen. Nurse, during these last months
My hidden thought has been of home and England.
I used to picture the delirious moment
When at the last I should indeed come home.
And often when some little thing had happened,
I thought, "this will I keep for her, this tell,
This little joy, for she will surely smile,
This care, this grief, for she will understand."
And as each month slipped past I thought the
length
Of my long exile and our separation
Would add unto the perfect joy of meeting,
And make the happiness more keen ; thus rather
Did I prolong the absence and delay,
Tasting each day anticipated joy.
Now she is gone ; and I was not allowed
Even to say good-bye to her, nor gain
One glimpse of her ; nor yet to touch her hand.
I would have given all to touch her hand,
And in that silent pressure speak at last
The love, which was too great for any words.

Therefore, nurse, would I now fain fall asleep
And wake, if wake I shall, to see her face.
For I am very weary, having lost
Too much this year on either side the sea.

[Enter CHANDOS.

CHANDOS

You summoned me, my lord, and I have come.

[Exit NURSE.

EDWARD

What news, what news? didst thou obtain an
audience?

CHANDOS

Yes, but 'twas brief; she swears she will depart
For ever from Bordeaux, at set of sun
This very day. She bade me bring to you
This ring, on which there shines a single ruby,
And a small scroll of parchment tied with silk.

EDWARD

It is the first gift which I gave to her.
Give me the parchment—there is something writ—
My eyes are heavy, I pray you read it me.

CHANDOS (*reads*)

“To hide my sorrow's secret smart,
I often laugh till it breaks my heart;

When love is dead and despair has come,
It is best for lips to be sealed and dumb ;
When Love is dead, and Death is nigh,
'Tis best to stifle memory.
Nothing can quicken the withered flower,
Never returns the once vanished hour ;
My heart is dead and my tears are dry,
'Tis best to stifle memory."

Below there is a line but faintly scrawled—
" At sunset I embark upon the sea.
Farewell, you loved me once "——

EDWARD

O Chandos, were you kind, you would draw forth
Your sword and plunge it in my heart and slay
The snake that dwells there, feeding. Was that all ?

CHANDOS

Yes, gentle lord ; those were her only words.

EDWARD

What did she when you saw her ?

CHANDOS

She stood and gazed
Out at the rippling sea from her high casement ;

Her eyes looked wistfully ; her cheek was pale.
She smiled upon me when she saw me come ;
Her smile was like the sunlight on the leaves
After long rains—a most divine soft smile,
And yet I think that she is very sad ;
I do not think she goes.

EDWARD

I cannot think
That she will truly go, and leave me here
Perchance to die alone, without a word.

[*Enter* LITTLE EDWARD.]

LITTLE EDWARD

How do you feel to-day, sweet father ? Better ?
It is a bright and sunny morn, the woods
Are paved with violets and slender wind-flowers,
And I have found wild tulips too : see here,
I bring you flowers ; but they do not smell
Save of the freshness of the earth. It rained
Last evening, and the grass is wet and fragrant.

EDWARD

Thank you, my little son.

LITTLE EDWARD

O father, tell me,
 When you are King of England—for nurse says
 You will be King of England—will my name
 Be the Black Prince, and shall I have a suit
 Of splendid coal-black armour like the one
 You used to wear at tourneys? it is long
 Since you rode in the lists. When you are well
 You must begin to ride. If I were King
 I should have tourneys every day. Please promise
 That we shall ride as soon as you are well.

EDWARD

I promise, little son, when I am well.
 Go and play gently while I slumber here.

[LITTLE EDWARD *runs on the balcony over-
 looking the sea. Pause of a moment.*

LITTLE EDWARD

O father! quickly come; a gallant ship
 Glittering and white is sailing past our window.

EDWARD (*rushing to the window*)

Chandos, take thou the child and leave me here,
 For in this hour I must be left alone.

[*He stands gazing out of the window.*

Too late, too late ! And she is gone away.
I was too late. Oh ! never did I dream
That she could leave me thus : she said "at sunset."
It is scarce sunset now, and she sails by
Already far from land ; thus she made sure
To trick me to the end. And now I see her,
Her blown hair making sweet the salt sea breeze ;
Beside the mast she stands like a tall taper
To light the ocean. By her side her lover
Does sit regarding her with wistful eyes.
Her lover ; not so many months ago
That word stood for another. She seems joyous,
A sister to the wind and to the foam,
And to the soft sea pearl. At the ship's prow
She stands like a white bird, a torch of beauty,
An angel native to the rippling sea,
And the bright sails are like her silver wings.
She holds within her hand a branch of blossom,
She must have plucked it soon before she started
From the tall almond tree whose branches brushed
Her casement pane. How glad we used to be
When the first blossom twinkled on the boughs.

[*Pause.*]

Now the bright sail is flying into the distance
A fleck of gleaming snow on the dark sea,
White in the blush of sunset. Not long since

I gazed with her on a receding ship,
Wondering what I should feel were it her sail,
And now it is her sail ; the very ship
That bears her off for ever. [Pause.

Mary, Mother,
Thou hast paid heed, and hearkened to my prayer ;
Thou hast stabbed my dead heart ; it beats again ;
Sorrow is coursing through my veins ; I feel
The edge of a sharp sword : my live heart bleeds ;
O, Queen of Heaven, I should thank thee now
For the sharp agony ; now that my eyes
Are burning with the moisture of salt tears ;
O Mary, I would fain run unto thee
And bury, like a child, my wretched face
In the soft texture of thy trailing robe.
But this is what I craved, O Mary, Mother ;
And I should thank thee for the granted prayer.
And yet, O Thou who understandest all,
Look in my heart and pity what is there.

*[He sinks into a chair and buries head
in his hands.*

Enter PRINCESS JOAN (singing).

I met him in the forest
Upon a summer day,
The time between the musk-rose
And the first rose of May.

JOAN

Is there not anything that I can do
To ease your suffering : lately there has come
A new physician from the far-off East,
Most skilled in remedies. Will you not see him ?

PRINCE

Oh ! how can the physicians bring me aid ?
They know not whence my sickness came, nor why
It lingers. I am weary ; before long
I shall be well again ; this aching fever
Comes and then goes : like rain in fickle April.

JOAN

Then if you will not listen to physicians,
If it is nothing,—and they oft have told me,
That there is nothing grave which ails you, why,
My lord, not strive to best the malady,
And go into the world again ? The Court
Is wearisome.

EDWARD

Sweet Joan, I am too tired ;
Believe me, if I could, I would be roused.

JOAN

Then I do pray you, see this new physician.

EDWARD

I will not see him, I have but a fever
Which all men know, who fight and travel far ;
But while it lasts it takes away the taste
Of the bright things of life. I would be quiet.

[*Exit PRINCESS, singing.*

The blue-bells that he gave me,
Lasted from morn till night,
And long before they faded
He had forgotten quite.

Enter SQUIRE

My liege, a messenger
All big with news awaits your audience.

EDWARD

Usher him in forthwith. I will receive him.

MESSENGER

My liege, I have a sorry tale to tell.
The City of Limoges, which has stood siege
Against the Dukes of Berry and of Bourbon,

And the great lords of France, has now been taken
Through basest treachery. The perjured bishop
Did secretly take counsel with the foe
And at the last surrendered the strong city
Into their hands.

EDWARD (*rising up from his chair in great anger*).

Now by my father's soul
I swear, and God has hitherto been pleased
To help me keep that oath, I will not pause
Nor taste a moment's peace until the traitor
Has dearly paid the price of treachery.
Summon my squires, call hither Thomas Felton
And the Chaptal de Buch, and every knight
Who pays me homage, for I go to war :
Bring me my armour, for I start to-day.
Haste, fetch the lords and nobles and instruct them
That we this very day march on Limoges,
Nor shall we rest until those city walls
Are razed unto the ground.

Enter SQUIRE

Give me my armour
At once, I say. Here, help me buckle it.
(*Tries and falls back exhausted.*)

I cannot rise ; I am as weak and helpless
As any babe. Think you because of that
He shall go scatheless ? think you that my sickness
Shall hinder me from taking Limoges town ?
I will be carried to the battlefield,
Yea, borne upon a litter to the siege.
Tell every soldier to make ready now,
For we, the Black Prince, go to war again.

(Fanfare of trumpets.)

ACT IV

SCENE I

Wood near Black Prince's Palace at Berkhamstead.

PRINCESS JOAN and NURSE

JOAN

Where is the Prince?

NURSE

Beyond the castle park
He rides with Richard in the further woods.

JOAN

'Twas wonderful how speedily his health
Mended when he set foot on native soil.

NURSE

I have not seen him thus since his son died.
He was half dead when we set sail for England,
So weak, so worn. I thought he scarce could reach
The shore alive, such was the wasting fury

Of grief, yet that same sorrow at his heart
Towered up so high and cast so black a shadow
That he forgot his body's malady.
But now he is well-nigh his ancient self.
And yet I fear the words of the physician,
Who said the envious sickness lurked in ambush,
And might attack him unawares.

JOAN

But now

Think not on such sad things. 'Tis Edward, see.
Good morrow, my sweet lord. Did you enjoy
A gallop in the fields? Was Richard with you?

[*Exit NURSE. Enter EDWARD.*]

EDWARD

Yea, it was pleasant in the new-drenched woodland.

JOAN

'Tis long since you have wandered in the woods,
Since you have been so far.

EDWARD

Yes, not till now
Have I gone riding in the further forest.

It is most pleasant there ; the grass is starred
With primroses ; from elm to budding elm
The finches dart, and from the hollow oak tree
The blackbird whistles an unceasing song.
It is the dawn of summer. Little Richard
Rode without fear ; I think that he will prove
A gallant rider and a goodly knight.

JOAN

Should you not take him soon to London town
To see thy father, who complains, they say,
Of loneliness ?

EDWARD

That is a matter, Joan,
Which I would fain take counsel of with you.
Thou knowest that soon after the black time
When my blest mother, Queen Philippa, died,
My father fell into the scheming hands
Of some hard harpy ; who by shameless ways
Had wormed herself into the court, alleging
A feignéd friendship with my sainted mother.
The name she calls herself is Alice Ferrers.
They say she came from France, but whence she
sprang,

And who she is men know not. For a while
The matter was half veiled in secrecy ;
But on a sudden day this brazen woman
Did take upon herself the rank of Queen,
Degrading the King's office and his Court,
And recommending vice with rich display.
This woman, decked, they tell me, with the
jewels
Which once my holy mother wore, does ride
Through London, habited as for a masque,
Dragging the King and the proud lords and
knights
Close at her heels. To satisfy her whims
And wanton sports, the treasuries of the land
Are drained. When first I heeded this affair,
I thought to find in John of Gaunt, my
brother,
An ally. He, alas ! refused his aid.
Therefore, at the new Parliament in April
I shall be present ; I shall free my country
From traitors who uphold a harlot's rule.

JOAN

But have you power enough ? She has the aid
Of Lancaster : and still the King is King.

EDWARD

My father now is helpless as a babe,
And any one can lead him ; if the commons
Convict the knaves, he cannot choose but sign
The ordinance which seals their fate. My brother
Will not dare anything, for England's people
Are angered.

JOAN

Hast thou seen this Alice Ferrers ?

EDWARD

Since she has held dominion in the court,
I have remained away in my own castle
Here, by the elms of Berkhamstead. The air
Is sweeter than in that plague-stricken court :
I would not see her ; nor my honoured father
A helpless puppet in her hands ; and she
As good as Queen, there, where my holy mother
Was Queen ; decked with my mother's very jewels.
My mother's jewels ! Think upon it, Joan !

JOAN

They say she is an evil sorceress,
And can assume the shape of beast or bird.

EDWARD.

Well, I shall need to see her, when I break
Her power, and drive her from the shore of England.

JOAN

My lord, be not too harsh upon that day ;
Remember that she is a woman.

EDWARD

She,
She is no woman, but a perjured witch,
Fit to be burned or drowned in the deep sea.

SCENE II

*In the woods, Berkhamstead. MARGARET and her
Maid.*

MARGARET

O freedom is a blessed thing : 'tis sweet,
If only for one day, to walk and wander
According to one's whim. To live a day
Far from that doting King, who slays my soul.

Far from the hateful palace, where I see
None save dark faces, hungry for my fall,
Far from the city where I breathe but hate.
I walked at Westminster hard by the river
But yesterday, and heard the people mutter,
“There goes the bane of England, Alice Ferrers,
Child of the devil. Cursèd be her soul!”
This, Mary, is Prince Edward’s own demesne,
That is why fancy led me to this place ;
Look not affrighted ; there is nought to fear.
The Prince is sick, and seldom leaves the castle.
And should we see him coming in the woods,
Why, we should hide in the thick undergrowth,
And I might look upon his face once more.
For I have never seen so fair a face,
And there is no one like him in the world,
And I have never loved but him alone.

MAID

I cannot think, my lady, but this walk
Is fraught with danger.

MARGARET

Nay, for if he came,
We should descry him coming in the distance.

I pray that he will come, for as I told you,
I fain would gaze upon his face once more.
Now leave me, Mary, I would be alone.

[*Exit MARY.*]

Mary spoke true. O why have I come hither?
It has but waked the demon of despair
That now possesses me, but sometimes seems
To sleep a listless slumber; why, O why
Have I as a lost angel come to gaze
On what was once my paradise of peace?
I know it is remorse that drives me here;
Yet greater than my crime I deem the wrong
The gods have done to me. One time I thought
That power could fill the empty place of love.
O! foolish was the thought and vain the dream!
And long ago I thought that I could fill
The vacancy of love with hate and crime,
And, thus by wreaking the supremest wrong,
On Edward's love, could find a bitter peace.
O foolish was that thought and vain that dream!

[*EDWARD appears suddenly through the trees.*]

EDWARD

My Margaret! O, thou art come at last!
The gods are good: the Heavens have heard my
prayer!

I knew that some time thou must surely come ;
Haste to my arms : nor waste one precious second
In craving for forgiveness,—that is given.
It was my fault that thou didst go away ;
My own, my grievous fault which I have wept
And expiated in long suffering ;
But see the wonder that the Heavens have done ;
They made me well, and gave me back my health
Just for the very season of thy coming ;
O Margaret, I love thee now as then.
And thou, dost thou love me ?

MARGARET

I do, my lord.
I love thee, Edward, more than all the world.
(They embrace.)

EDWARD

O Margaret, I knew that thou must come !
I prayed to God to give me strength to wait ;
O almost did I yield and I was near
To hopelessness ; my faith, my hope, my strength
Were ebbing like the tide. And yet one thought,
One thought more bright than any moon, one hope
More strong than adamant, one little hope
Still lingered like a hard invincible gem

In the cold darkness of my heart. The hope,
Which day by day grew into certainty,
That I should see thee, meet thee once again.
And every day I prayed unto Our Lady
To grant me life till I should see thy face
Once more, to keep thee safe from hurt and
harm ;
I clung to life by that prevailing prayer.
But thou, what have the Heavens done to thee ?

MARGARET

I have lived like a blind and helpless ghost
Lost in the shadows of an endless night ;
Like a numbed creature in a winter world.

EDWARD

All these last years have been a winter dream
Which makes the awakening of the Spring more
sweet,
For now it is the Spring, and I do meet thee
Among the flowers of April. God is kind.
When hope in all things fair, when desperate faith
In truth and good had perished utterly,
When courage and endurance were nigh dead,
You rise upon my life again. The spring
Is here ; the trees are scarcely green, the earth

Is sweet with tender shoots ; but you, too swift,
Come bringing not the Dawn but the full noon ;
Not Spring, but the whole majesty of Summer—
The summer with his robe of gorgeous gold,
Drenched with the blood of roses and of poppies ;
Stiff with the splendid ripple of ripe corn ;
Embroidered with the wings of dragon-flies ;
His arms all laden with soft crimson fruit,
Crowned with the sickle of the silver moon,
And bearing the tall hollyhock for sceptre.
Throned on the haze of noonday, with a noise
Of turtle-doves and bees and nightingales,
His minstrels, bathed in a great cloud of fragrance
That sheds and scatters many million scents ;
Some warm from the mown hayfields, others
cool

From the moist haunts of floating waterlilies,
Some languorous from the creeping jessamine,
Some fresh and dewy from the honeysuckle,
Some aromatic from the dying leaves
Of strawberries, some dreamy from the pink,
Some rich and riotous from the dark rose,
Some heavy from the lily. And in his eyes,
And drooping from the shadow of his hair,
The softness of June twilight and the rapture
Of the star-haunted, hot, midsummer night.

MARGARET

My lord, my warrior. Through these lonely years,
I have known one thought only : it was thou.
O, greatly did I long to see thy face,
Thy face, the lantern of my life, once more.
Therefore I kneel to thee, imploring pardon
For leaving thee. I was like one possessed,
Because I thought you did not love me more.
My life, too, has been one long wintertide.
The day I left you, then my heart did perish,
And in its empty precinct dwelt despair.
Therefore, my lord, my warrior, and my king,
I do implore forgiveness. Through these years
I, too, have clung to life by one strong prayer—
The prayer that I might see thy face once more.

EDWARD

But why speak thus? Now I am well again,
Nought in the world shall sunder us again :
Where are you, Margaret? whence did you come
To seek me in my home?

MARGARET

I now do dwell
In London.

EDWARD

Thus alone ?

MARGARET

Yes, quite alone.

EDWARD

Tell me thy dwelling ;—before very long
I, too, will come to London to be with thee.

MARGARET

O come not thou to London. Let us meet
Here in these woods. I do not love the town.

EDWARD

Nay, but I must. So say where thou dost dwell.

MARGARET

I have a little house on Fish-Street Hill.
But, hark, the noise of hoofs. 'Tis some one comes.

EDWARD

Then must I flee ;—I shall be at thy house
The day before the Parliament doth meet.

[*Exit. Enter MARY.*

MARGARET

Mary, come hither, with all speed, come hither—
Thou sawest it was the Prince : he loves me still,
And pardoned me without a word or question.
O merciful, sweet God, what shall I do ?
He questioned me about my dwelling house.
I lied : I could not speak the hideous truth.
Mary, how could I tell the truth to him ?
The fatal truth ? 'Twere better to have told him :
Surely my lie will swiftly find me out.
I told him that I dwelt where thy old mother
Dwells on the hill ; and thither will he seek me
The day before the Parliament does meet.
There must I be ; for he will surely come.
O Queen of Heaven, help me in my need.

SCENE III

Room in Fish Hill Street. MARGARET and MARY

MARGARET

I have not slept these many nights ; the days
Pass like a dreadful dream ; what shall I do ?
'Tis past the noonday and he is not come.
Think you that he will come ? What think you, Mary ?

MARY

I think that if he fall not sick again,
He surely will come here.

MARGARET

I thought one moment
That I would let thee bide here with a message
To say— But what could I have said to him?
That I was sick? then he would wish to see me:
That I no longer loved him? no, my God!
I cannot say that dreadful thing again.
I have been sorely punished for that saying.
That I was dead? 'Twere best, to make it true.
And yet methinks 'twere cowardly to die
Before the last necessity had come. (Knock.)

Enter EDWARD, very pale.

EDWARD

Margaret, my love; see, Margaret, I am here;
Is this thy dwelling? art thou fallen now
To such a home?

MARGARET

Let us not speak of that.
Thou art most pale to-day, my lord. Thy sickness
Has left thee, has it not?

EDWARD

It all but vanished,
I thought : but now it is come back again ;
And I am eaten with a fiery fever.
I knew the wondrous star of happiness
Could not for ever shine.

MARGARET

Thou needest rest,
My lord : once get you back to Berkhamstead,
It soon will pass away.

EDWARD

Dost thou know why
I come to London for the Parliament ?

MARGARET

Nay, I know little of thy state affairs.

EDWARD

I come to rid the nation of its foes ;
To break the schemers, and to hang the traitors.
I come to show my brother, John of Gaunt,
That I, not he, am still the heir of England.
Yet what I chiefly come for, my proud purpose,

Is to deliver my fair land of England
From out a harlot's hands ; to crush the power
Of that foul witch and carrion of hell
Whose name is Alice Ferrers.

[MARGARET *gives a suppressed cry.*

EDWARD

Dost thou know her ?

MARGARET

Nay : it was but the violence of thy speech
That frightened me.

EDWARD

My violence shall be deeds.
That is why I am here, although the fever
Burns in my bones like fire, although, perchance,
I have not many weeks to live : till then
I shall live : after that I little care
What may befall.

MARGARET

Are you so very sure
That she is guilty ?

EDWARD

She ? What dost thou mean ?

MARGARET

Some women have no fortune in this world.
I cannot see so terrible a crime
In that this woman is your father's mistress.
If some one had once come to you, and cursed
My name in the sweet season of Bordeaux,
What would you not have done? Oh, heed; oh, think,
Of that far-off enchanted time when we
Were happy; when we loved and took no thought;
When every day we parted but to meet
Again the morrow, under orchard trees,
Or on the gleaming sand by the pale sea,
At sunrise or at sunset, at the dawn,
Or in the twilight, I was ever there;
And little did we heed the busy world
Or talk of men. Your kingdom was my face;
My universe was hidden in your heart.
So for the sake of that divinest dream
Be not now over-harsh. But rather think
What you had felt, had some one, with stern words,
Frowned on our happiness.

EDWARD

Oh! Margaret,
You know not what you say. You ne'er have seen
Such women. There can be no talk of love.

My father now is old, decrepit, weak
And wistful in his dotage, full of greed ;
A harlot snatches him, and he becomes
A helpless puppet in her hands, and more,
Her use of power is deadly, for she helps
Our foes ; and drains the riches of the state
By luxury.

MARGARET

How canst thou thus be sure ?
This woman needs must have a million foes,
And not one friend, and no one to defend her,
Save the old helpless King. It is most cruel
To put the fault at once upon the woman.
Thou dost not know aught of this Alice Ferrers :
Haply she was unhappy and sore tempted.
And as for the dark plots thou say'st she weaves,
Most like they blame her but to screen themselves ;
Thus would all subtle courtiers ever do,
And schemers who infest the homes of Kings.
I pray thee be not pitiless to her,
For thou wast ever chivalrous and gentle
To every woman.

EDWARD

Yes, I must be harsh :
I shall seek out this Ferrers for myself,

And tell her in her face what I have told
To thee, and more.

MARGARET

Oh ! mercy for this woman.

What has she done to you ? Oh ! pity her ;
Let her defence be that she was surrounded
By evil men, who have no fear of God,
Nor man nor devil ; and, to shield oneself,
It is an easy thing to lay the guilt
On such a woman. Large and high of soul,
Thou with the eyes of kindness, thou, Black Prince,
Thou who hast been so courteous and so gentle,
So mild in thy great mind, so fair, so equal,
So just, so generous, now be merciful :
Have pity on this miserable woman.
I pray you, Edward, now with my whole heart,
Upon my knees, with tears, to pity her :
For my sake ; for the past's most holy sake,
For love's sake, for the love you have for me ;
Be merciful, my lord, and show compassion.

EDWARD

How can you, Margaret, defend her thus ?
Think of the means this harlot has employed

To snatch at power and gold : an old man's lust !
She young and beautiful !——

[MARGARET stops his mouth with her hand.

MARGARET

Stop. Hold thy tongue.

[Pause.

Hear me, my Edward, hear and understand :
When I did think that you no longer loved me,
My love turned to unutterable hate.
Hating, I sought the uttermost revenge
And crime unspeakable.

[Kneels.

Now draw thy sword

And slay me here, for I am Alice Ferrers.

[EDWARD looks at her as though dazed. He then draws his sword, hesitates a moment, but lets the sword drop out of his hands. He then walks out of the room in silence without looking at MARGARET.

SCENE IV

*Room in Westminster. Priests discovered with incense,
&c., round Black Prince's couch. Exeunt Priests.
EDWARD lying on couch. NURSE.*

EDWARD

What is to-day that bells ring?

NURSE

'Tis the feast

Of Trinity.

EDWARD

Oh! I am well content
To die upon a Sunday and in summer.
Upon the high day of the Trinity
Which all my life I kept with solemn feast.
Sing to me, nurse.

NURSE

The roses in my garden
Were white in the noonday sun.

EDWARD

No, not that song: I cannot hear that song.
Sing something else: some ancient cradle song.

NURSE *sings*

From the bleak sand and the grey sand
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*),
To the shore of gold and the cornland
To conquer or to die.

The low cloud and the grey cloud
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*),
It hangs and lowers like a shroud
Across the blood-red sky.

The soft sound and the loved sound
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*):
"Mother, I have a mortal wound,"
It is my own son's cry.

The horn call and the glad call
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*):
"Now dig the grave and weave the pall,
For I am soon to die."

The lone bell and the sad bell
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*):
"Tell them, mother, before I fell,
That I fought gallantly."

The known tread and the strong tread
(*O son o' mine good-bye*):
"One told me you were cold and dead,
But I heeded not the lie."

By sunshine or by moonshine
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*):
"Come back to me, O son o' mine,
I've waited patiently."

THE BLACK PRINCE

The loud song and the strange song
(O son o' mine, good-bye) :
 "I've watched and waited now so long,
 Come back before I die."

From the bleak sand and the grey sand
(O son o' mine, good-bye) :
 To the shore of gold and the cornland,
 To conquer or to die.

EDWARD

I wish to speak with my son Richard, now,
 While yet my feeble utterance may be heard.
 Open the doors, call hither all my men,
 That I may thank them for their services ;
 That they may swear allegiance to my son.

Enter LORDS and BARONS

EDWARD [To Barons.

Sirs, it is strange how, when I was quite young,
 When I came home from Crécy, you would speak
 Of how I should some day prove a great King,
 Haply the greatest of my country's Kings,
 And win large lands and many victories.
 The victories I won : but where are they ?
 All that we fought for has been lost again ;
 My conquests are a half-forgotten dream.
 Yet haply, but the bare names of my battles

May strike a spark in English hearts some day,
In the far future ; haply, hearts will beat
Quicker when they shall hear those names but
spoken,

Poitiers and Crécy—faint and far away
It seems—as though the long wars had befallen
Some other man, not me. Yet now I die ;
I rail not at the past, and I would live
My life again, save the last shadowed years.
My death-knell rang on Navarette field.
Since then I have not lived, or lived in vain.
Sirs, you have served me loyally, and though
To each I cannot give his guerdon, God
By His most holy Name shall give it you.
I recommend to you my son ; as yet
He is but small, but, as you have served me,
So, from your heart, I pray you may serve him.
Call Richard and my wife : I wish to see them.

Enter RICHARD and PRINCESS JOAN

EDWARD

Joan, I have prayed forgiveness for my sins,
And received absolution from the priest :
My will is writ ; I am prepared to die ;
I die contented ; I leave little Richard,
Take care of him ; and thou, my son, remember

Thou had'st a father who did never know
A coward's heart, nor saw the face of fear ;
Nor thought upon the whereabouts of Death ;
Whose motto was " High Spirit " ; who at one time,
When God bereft him of his hopes and dreams,
His strength, his health, his power, his happiness,
Was tempted to surrender, to despair,
To make Death his ally ; but being a soldier,
Defeated, he deserted not the field
While the fight lasted. Thus must thou do also,
That, when thou diest, men may say of thee,
" The Prince of chivalry in all the world,
Has left in no dishonourable wise
The lists, to go and slumber in his tent." [Pause.
For though my lot in life was with the conquered,
I have yielded not till the hour of death ;
But now at last I may lay down my arms.
Hark ! a strange bugle-call that summons me,
Far-off from the dominion of the dead !
Soon shall I pass into my kingdom, soon
Shall I assume my high inheritance,
Where there awaits no throne nor crown for me ;
Naught but the friend to whom I looked for help,
The sure friend and the strong, unfailing friend,
Who held aloof his hand and veiled his face ;
Now I shall feel the solace of that hand,

And gaze upon the glory of that face.
For Death, my friend, who shunned me for so long,
Holds out his hand, and hides his face no more.
Can you not hear the roll of phantom drums?
The noise of arms? For now the sleeping dead,
The valiant dead who perished unafraid,
All stir to welcome me, and while I march
To Death's triumphant portal, I shall hear
The clash of ghostly arms and the strange bugle;
But once within the silvery hall of dusk,
There will be no more noise. I shall forget
The rolling echoes of the battlefield.
At last I shall lie down among the dead,
And shut my eyes without the dread of dawn.
I, likewise, now, the heir of happiness,
Rich in my portion of the priceless gift,
Shall sleep beneath the radiant vault of peace,
Among the brave who lie for ever still.

[*Pause. Whispers to NURSE.*

Come close to me and murmur in my ear,
The song I asked you not to sing just now.

NURSE *murmurs softly*

The roses in my garden
Were white in the noonday sun;
But they were dyed with crimson
Before the day was done.

THE BLACK PRINCE

All clad in golden armour,
To fight the Saladin,
He left me in my garden,
To weep, to sing and spin.

When fell the dewy twilight,
I heard the wicket grate,
There came a ghost who shivered
Beside my garden gate.

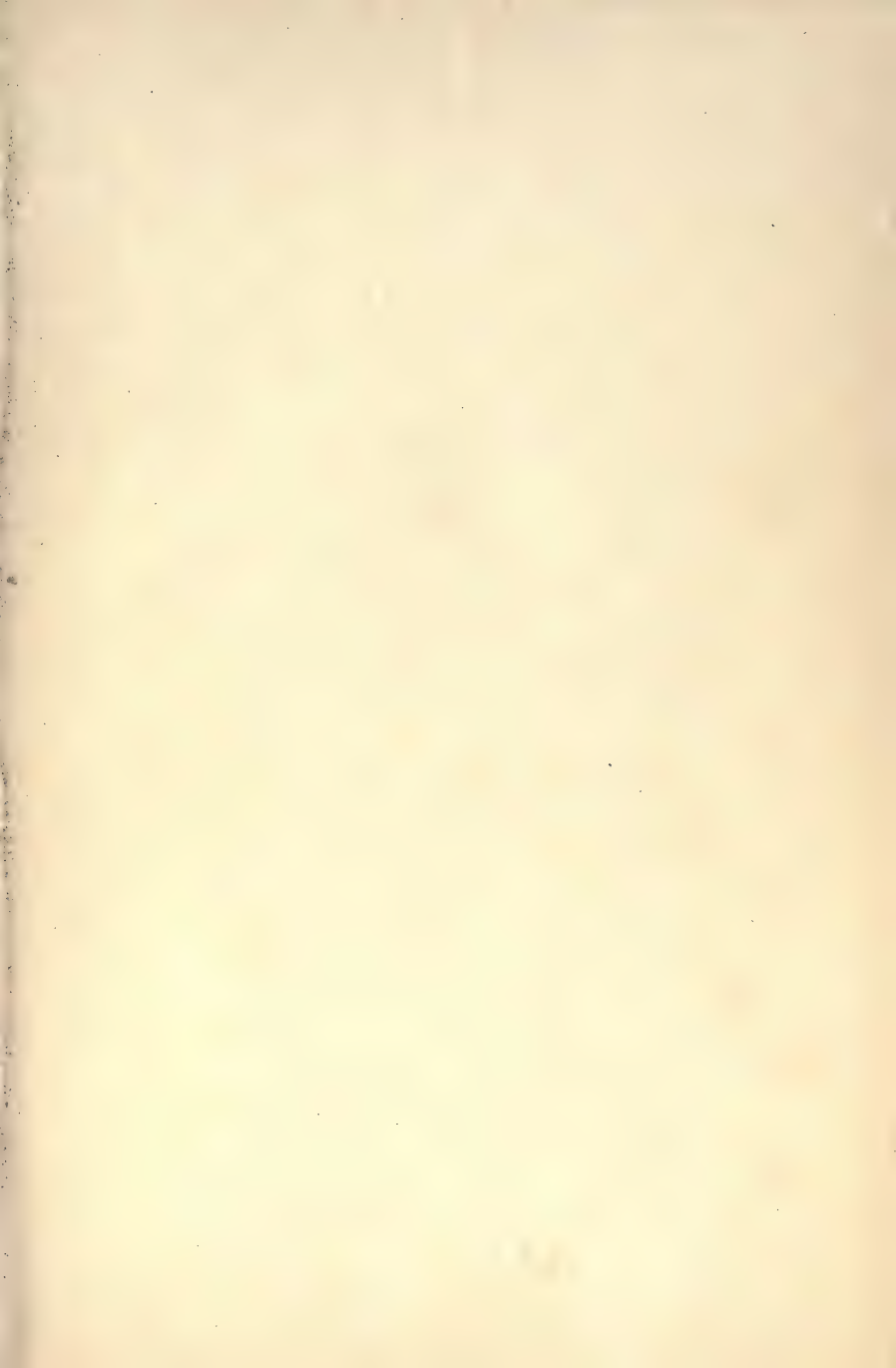
All clad in golden armour,
But dabbled with red dew ;
He did not lift his vizor :
And yet the face I knew.

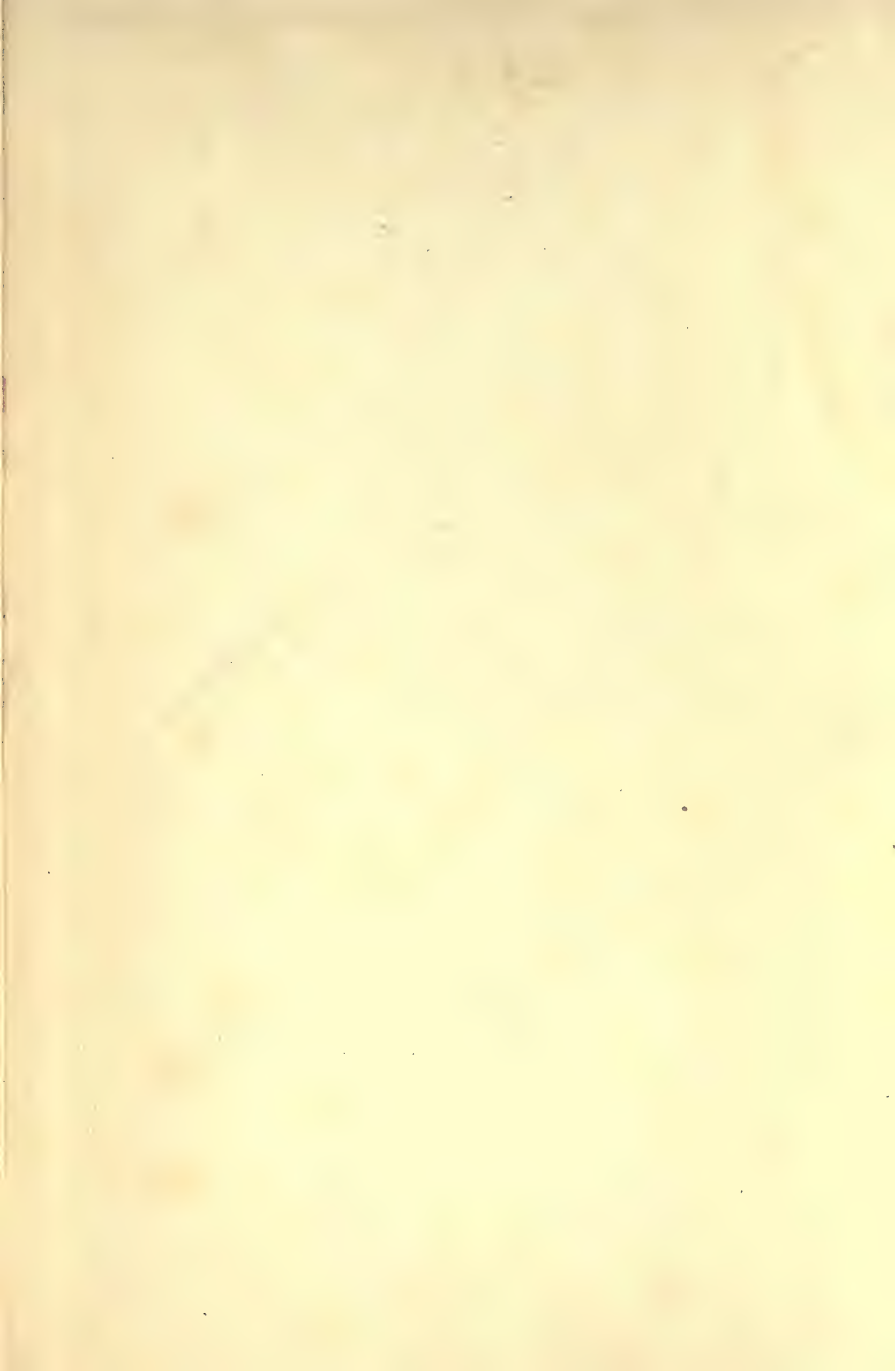
NURSE

Now I will sing no more, for the Black Prince
Sleeps, and will never wake to hear the end.

THE END

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Baring, Maurice
The Black Prince

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